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Kellie Victoria Vincent BSc.(Hons) MSc.

An Investigation into Consumer-Brand Relationships

A thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Based upon research conducted at
The Open University Business School within the disciplines of
Brand Management and Marketing

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(Revised May 2002)

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STATEMENT

Previously published material

A conference paper has been previously published which refers to some of the theses theoretical underpinnings.

Vincent, K. and de Chernatony, L. (1999) Investigating Relationships at the Level of the Brand from the Perspectives of Both Organisations and Consumers. The 15th Annual IMP Conference, Dublin

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ABSTRACT

An emerging perspective in marketing theory and practice is to consider consumers entering a range of metaphorical relationships with brands. This supersedes the concept of brand loyalty because it takes into account brand portfolios with which consumers enter relationships and does not restrict loyalty to a single brand.

This thesis will build on the limited work into metaphorical brand relationships. The role of relationship marketing in building or jeopardizing relationships will be investigated. Combining the three literature streams of branding, relationship marketing and interpersonal relationship psychology provides insight into consumer behaviour. This enables brand and relationship marketing strategies to be better matched to consumers' needs.

A central argument in the thesis states that to fully understand the relationship, both consumers and brands require investigation. A consumer-brand relationship theoretical model is proposed. The model consists of four elements; the consumer; the brand; the relationship and finally the context. The consumer and the brand elements are deconstructed further. On the brand side organisational culture and strategy are thought to contribute towards relationship marketing approaches and direct brand strategy. Brand strategy, positioning and personality determine the actions of the brand as a relationship partner. Consumer behaviour was attributed to their socialisation and lifestyle, self-concept and attachment

style. Attachment style is the area of personality that determines behaviour within interpersonal relationships.

The consumer brand relationship model was investigated through five research hypotheses. Two service industries within a case study research design were used to test the hypotheses. Although the broad consumer-brand relationship model was supported, attachment style was not found to influence the quality of brand level relationships. The form of relationship marketing strategy on the other hand was found to determine the quality of relationships.

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CHAPTER ONE

OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Investigating Consumer-Brand relationships is a relatively new topic area for research in the marketing field. Three disciplines are drawn together within this research in order to further understand relationships that consumers enter with their brands. The three literature involved areas are brand management, relationship marketing and interpersonal relationship psychology. As consumer-brand relationship theory is in it's infancy, the purpose of this research is to build upon the limited existing knowledge.

This opening chapter introduces the background to the research. The research scope and justifications for the study are presented. The methodology employed is explained prior to an overview of the research findings. To guide the reader through the thesis, each of the chapters are then discussed with regard to the topics covered.

1.2 SCOPE OF THE RESEARCH

Since the 1990's relationship marketing has attracted significant academic and practitioner attention yet, as a research area it remains ambiguous. As with many business strategies, misunderstanding, oversimplification and inappropriate applications have turned relationship marketing into a 'buzzword' (Ambler, 1995; Barnes, 1994; Brodie, 1997). A plethora of definitions (Harker, 1999)

and divergent academic origins may have contributed to its potential value being overlooked. In addition, the rich clusters of associations with the construct 'relationship' (e.g. intimacy and emotional bonds) are rarely applied to relationship marketing.

Relationships in marketing can occur: between organisations; within organisations (internal marketing); between organisations and their consumers and between brands and consumers. The latter dyad is the least researched and is a relatively new area for investigation. Blackstone (1993) and Fournier (1994) are among the first researches to develop the 'brand as a relationship partner' metaphor. Their work emerged from a brand research perspective. Few researchers in the relationship marketing field have recognised the existence of brand level relationships. Although relationship principles appear to be excluded from relationship marketing strategies, they have been incorporated into brand level relationship studies. This is attributable to the use of interpersonal relationships literature (Fournier, 1996). The formation of consumer-brand relationships can be linked to the motivations of people engaging in social relationships. Research into parasocial relationships has been particularly useful in adding credibility to the concept of consumers entering relationships with brands. This work found that parasocial relationships are in many ways similar to social relationships (Cohen, 1997).

The emerging consumer-brand relationships theory provides insight into several aspects of consumer behaviour. Brand loyalty, product meaning and the symbolic consumption of brands are but a few of the topics that may benefit from work in this area.

Three main components are critical when investigating brand level relationships. These are: the brand, the consumer and the relationship. This study develops a theoretical model of consumer-brand relationships which incorporates all three elements. On the brand side of the model, corporate strategy, culture, brand strategy, positioning and personality are relevant. On the consumer side lifestyle, socialisation, personality and self-concept are considered important. Drawing upon the personal relationships literature in psychology enabled the concept of attachment style to be explored. Attachment style is the dimension of personality, which determines how individuals behave within interpersonal relationships.

Combining the areas of relationship marketing, branding, psychology, and interpersonal relationships contribute to the further development of consumer-brand relationship theory, as will be clarified in this thesis.

1.3 THE NECESSITY FOR THIS RESEARCH

This research builds upon the limited knowledge into consumer-brand relationships. No empirical studies were found which directly link the areas of relationship marketing to brand level relationships. To advance knowledge in this area, it was considered important for research to be carried out which incorporated all three components i.e. the consumer, the brand and the relationship. Although particular metaphorical relationship types had been identified by Fournier (1994) and were further investigated by Fajer and Schouten (1995) and Gordon et al (1998), the quality of each of these relationships had not been empirically tested. Also, as in life, not everyone is

content in all forms of relationship. This research therefore took the first steps in identifying whether specific individuals would be more satisfied within particular relationships. Three research issues were identified as important to build upon existing knowledge, these were;

- the quality of each type of consumer-brand relationship;
- the types of consumer most likely to enter and be content within each type of relationship;
- the effect of different relationship marketing strategies on consumer-brand relationships.

All three topics were incorporated into the research programme.

1.4 OVERVIEW OF THE METHODOLOGY

A case study approach was used in order to fully investigate the three elements of consumer-brand relationships. An embedded, multiple case study enabled a detailed investigation of both consumers and the organisations responsible for determining brand behaviour. It was also possible to explore the form of relationship the parties shared.

Two service industries were chosen for investigation. They were selected because of their perceived differences in market characteristics and relationship building approaches. The UK airline industry and branded hair-salon chains were considered distinct enough to test generalisation across service types to be claimed. Two case companies were recruited for each of the service industries.

Qualitative research was initially undertaken, followed by quantitative research. In terms of the qualitative phase, interviews with key organisational informants

were carried out. In addition, any published materials regarding these firms brands that consumers would have access to were content analysed. A quantitative survey identified consumers' perceptions and opinions about their relationship with the brands. An acceptable number of usable responses were achieved from all but one of the case studies. Three cases generated response rates of 47%, 35% and 32%, but only a 7% response was achieved from the fourth case study. Fieldwork difficulties and a lack of co-operation from one of the airlines meant that the response rate was particularly low. Attempts were made to find a way to boost the sample size but when the organisation rejected requests for further participation, the case was excluded from the analysis. Despite this limitation, the overall case research was found to be robust and enabled valuable contributions to be made.

1.5 OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

The research found that different forms of relationships vary in terms of their quality. Contextual factors however added complexity to the inter-dyadic interactions. This means that determining relationship quality is not as simple as finding out what form of relationship exists and its corresponding level of quality. For the hair-salon brands, where consumer involvement was high and consumers were very satisfied with the service, it was possible to predict the quality of relationships. Relationship types were expected to fall within high, medium or low levels of quality depending on the characteristics present. These relationship types were metaphors for interpersonal relationships as this approach has successfully been applied within a limited number of previous studies (Gordon et al, 1998; Fournier, 1996; Fajer and Schouten, 1995). High levels of quality were expected within committed partnerships, dependencies and

childhood friendships. Medium quality scores were expected from courtships, flings and casual friendships. Finally, only low levels of quality were expected from enslavement based relationships. The relationships between the hair-salon brands and their consumers did follow this prediction. For the airline case, which had very low levels of consumer satisfaction and a confused brand message, the quality of each relationship did not conform to expectations. Where relationships have similar attributes and so were clustered together within the high or medium relationship sets, it was not possible to find differences in their levels of quality.

The role of consumer personality in determining whether individuals would be content within particular relationship types was found to be particularly complex. Attachment style determines how individuals perceive and behave in interpersonal relationships but the same findings did not emerge in consumer-brand relationships. Three attachment styles exist. These are referred to as secure, anxious and avoidant. Within the research attachment style was expected to determine the satisfaction individuals found within different types of relationship; preference for brands with particular personalities and opinions towards relationship marketing approaches. None of these propositions were supported and so the research calls for a more appropriate personality dimension to be investigated within future research.

Finally the form of relationship marketing strategy influences the quality of consumer-brand relationships. Relationship marketing strategies were sorted into a hierarchical framework. The result was a four level relationship marketing typology consisting of customer partnering; customer retention; pseudo relationships and database marketing. Strategies that incorporate the rules

associated with friendship and other positive interpersonal relationships such as customer partnering strategies were found to lead to higher quality relationships between brands and consumers.

1.6 ORGANISATION OF THE THESIS

To guide the reader through the rest of the thesis, each of the remaining thirteen chapters and the topics covered within each are now synthesised.

Chapter two looks at the perception of relationships in marketing. The chapter examines what constitutes a relationship and constructs a working definition. How far relationship principles are applied to relationship marketing is assessed before the role relationship marketing plays in consumer-brand relationships is considered.

Chapter three focuses on brand level relationships. The concept of the brand as a partner is explored. Parasocial relationships are discussed as well as the central topics of brand personality and brand loyalty. It is argued that brand personality plays a key role in brand relationships. Justifications as to why consumer-brand relationships supersede the concept of brand loyalty are advanced.

Chapter four considers the consumer's role within relationships. Issues such as what motivates consumers to enter relationships and how they are likely to behave are discussed. The concept of attachment style is explored with regard to its expected influence on consumer-brand relationships.

Chapter five draws together the previous three chapters to develop a theoretical framework for consumer-brand relationships. The chapter established testable hypotheses based on the three main research topics.

Chapter six justifies the overall research design framework. This includes overviews of the two service industries selected.

Chapter seven discusses in detail the qualitative phase of research and the content analysis methods applied.

Chapter eight provides a detailed overview of the quantitative fieldwork.

Chapter nine explains the data analysis methods applied to the quantitative research. Each hypothesis is considered in turn and the statistical techniques are justified.

Chapters ten, eleven and twelve separately cover the findings of each of the case companies. Chapter ten covers the salon referred to as Brush, chapter eleven covers the second salon known as Comb and chapter twelve looks at the airline (alias Wing).

Chapter thirteen draws comparisons across the three case studies and considers possible reasons for similarities and differences. Contextual and methodological issues that may have influenced the research are evaluated.

Chapter fourteen draws the thesis to a conclusion. The relevance of the consumer-brand relationship model developed in chapter five in light of the research findings is considered. The contribution made to knowledge is summarised, as are the study's limitations. Areas worthy of future research are reviewed before implications for marketing practice are outlined.

CHAPTER 2

THE PERCEPTION OF RELATIONSHIPS IN MARKETING

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter considers how relationships are perceived in marketing and the implications that arise from these perceptions. The term 'relationship' is difficult to define because relationships occur at different levels, between different groups and are manifest in different forms. The chapter begins by examining what constitutes a relationship and attempts to construct a working definition. The argument then moves to consider how far this view of relationships has been applied within marketing. Relationship marketing has received an increasing amount of attention since the early 1990's from both marketing academics and practitioners but there has been little consensus about its meaning and application. An overview of relationship marketing is included in this chapter. The argument that all relationship marketing practices help build strong and profitable long-term relationships is questioned. The final section of the chapter assesses the role of relationship marketing in building loyalty and the extent that it aids the development of consumer-brand relationships.

2.2 WHAT CONSTITUTES A RELATIONSHIP?

To investigate relationships between consumers and their brands it is important to first establish what is meant by the term 'relationship'. Few marketing academics have attempted to define the term and the majority rely on the readers understanding of the concept. Relationships occur at multiple levels within

society and each relationship type will possess different characteristics. Family relationships for example differ substantially from working relationships. Equally, families within their own cultural environment find that relationships are not the same between all members. For instance, relationships between siblings are different to relationships between parents and children. Relationships are unique to the parties involved in them (Acitelli, Duck and West, 2000) and because of this the concept as a whole is difficult to define. It is therefore important to provide a working definition to ensure a consistent meaning. Previous research that has not set out such a definition has risked being misinterpreted, as readers ascribe their own perceptions of what constitutes a relationship based on their unique relationship experiences. The Oxford English Dictionary (1998) definition of 'relationship' is divided into a core sense and several subsenses:

Core sense;

The way in which two or more concepts; objects; or people are connected; or the state of being connected.

Subsenses;

The state of being connected by blood or marriage

The way in which two or more people or organisations regard and behave towards each other

An emotional or sexual relationship

The core sense highlights several points of importance for this research. Firstly, there are two or more parties within a relationship. Secondly, relationships do not occur purely between people but also between objects. Thirdly, there is a connection between the parties. The strength of this connection will determine

the quality of the relationship. The subsenses provide indications of the forms relationships take. The first sub-sense, which relates to blood or marriage, will not be literally relevant in the study of consumer-brand relationships. The second two subsenses do however show relevance. The way in which people *regard* or *behave towards* one another is important in the study of consumer-brand relationships, as is an *emotional* element of a relationship. For brands to act as a relationship partner they must show regard for the consumers they are in a relationship with. Max Blackston, one of the first researchers to investigate brand level relationships argued that to fully appreciate the relationship you need to know what each party thinks the other thinks about them (Blackston,1993). Those who manage brands determine how they behave as relationship partners. The behavioural element of the definition is important as without behavioural actions such as a purchase by the consumer or the brand being available for purchase, then a relationship will not exist. The emotional component of a relationship is particularly relevant within this research as the fulfilment of both functional and emotional needs is a central purpose of the brand (de Chernatony,1998).

Attempts made within marketing to define the relationship construct have focussed on the areas of consumer-brand relationship investigations and to a limited extent relationship marketing.

Relationship marketing by nature of its own title requires an evaluation of the term 'relationship'. Surprisingly though, few researchers in this field have directly addressed the meaning of the term 'relationship' but have debated at

length how to define the wider concept of relationship marketing per se. In many cases this has lead to fundamental relationship characteristics being omitted from some relationship building strategies. Gummesson (1999) is an exception to those researchers who ignore the meaning of relationships with his reference that;

“Relationships require at least two parties who are in contact with each other”
(page 1)

Although it is brief, Gummesson’s definition does add the concept of contact or a necessary interaction to our understanding of what a relationship is.

Whilst advancing knowledge of consumer-brand relationships Fournier (1996) identified three elements as constituting a relationship:

interdependence – the behaviour of each relationship participant is co-ordinated with and influenced by the behaviour of the other partner;

temporality – must occur over an extended period of time and involve repeated exchanges;

emotional bonds – which act as ties and provide unification.

Fournier (1994) also identified four conditions that must be satisfied in order for a relationship to exist, these are;

- a reciprocal exchange between active and independent relationship partners;
- the core purpose is the provision of meaning;
- they are multiplex phenomena with a range of forms definitions and benefits;

- they are process phenomena that change over a series of interactions and contextual environments.

The notions of reciprocity, meaning development and dynamic processes did not appear within the dictionary definition of 'relationship' however they are strongly grounded in the field of interpersonal relationships (Hogg et.al.,1995; Dickson and Duck,1993). The interpersonal relationships literature provides insight into the nature of relationships. Rather than providing a definitive answer to the question 'what is a relationship?' the majority of work has concentrated on establishing what are the characteristics of a relationship. Just as Fournier (1996) set out a list of conditions that had to be met for a relationship to exist, Hinde (1981) identified several relationship attributes these were: interactions; reciprocity and complementarity; intimacy; interpersonal perceptions and commitment.

By combining the definitions and characteristics a working definition for this research is;

A relationship is a dynamic, mutually perceived and interdependent interaction between two or more parties, which is maintained by emotional bonds, commitment, intimacy, and reciprocity.

Unlike other work which studies relationships in marketing, this definition does not describe 'relationship marketing' but the root of what a 'relationship' is. Whether or not relationships are perceived by marketers in the sense outlined in the 'relationship' definition will be investigated within the overview of

relationship marketing. A separate definition for relationship marketing will be discussed within this overview.

2.3 RELATIONSHIP MARKETING

Relationship marketing has attracted significant academic and practitioner attention over the past decade, yet, as a research area it still remains ambiguous. Academics speak of different levels or guises (Barnes,1994; Brodie,1997; Gordon,1998; Iacobucci,1996) and with a plethora of definitions (Berry,1995; Brodie,1997; Gronroos,1995; Harker,1999; Hunt,1997; Mattsson,1997; Tynan,1997) relationship marketing has become a 'buzzword' (Ambler,1995; Barnes,1994; Brodie,1997; Fournier,1998; Gordon,1998). This could be due to its divergent academic origins which, amongst others include business to business marketing (Ambler,1995; Mattsson,1997), the Nordic school of services (Gronroos,1995), a markets network perspective (Christopher,1991; Mattsson,1997), and total quality management (Beckett-Camarata,1998).

2.3.1 Definition of Relationship Marketing

Some argue that it is not possible to find a 'perfect' definition because of the dissimilarity of origins. Harker (1999) whilst trying to find the 'best' definition carried out a review of 117 articles and books on relationship marketing and uncovered 26 definitions. He found that authors definitions differed not only according to which relationship marketing school of thought they subscribed, but also whether the definition took a 'broad' or 'narrow' view. Harker (1999) explains what he means by a 'narrow' view as those that;

“Specifically highlight certain conceptual aspects of RM rather than the ‘whole’. Examples of a narrow rather than broad focus include Berry (1983) who emphasises the ‘beginnings’ of marketing relationships, Christopher et al. (1991) who stress the importance of relationship marketing’s ‘customer keeping’ orientation and Paravatiyar (1996), who highlights the potential benefits of an RM strategy.”

(page 15)

A conceptually complete definition taking a ‘broad view’ includes seven categories, all of which are important to relationship marketing.

These are shown in the Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Seven conceptual categories of relationship marketing

<i>Category</i>	<i>Other expressions used within the category</i>
Creation	Attracting, establish, getting
Development	Enhancing, strengthening
Maintenance	Sustaining, stable, keeping
Interactive	Exchange, mutually, co-operative
Long term	Lasting, permanent, retaining
Emotional content	Commitment, trust, promises
Output	Profitable, rewarding, efficiency

Adapted from Harker (1999)

Harker did not find a definition in which all seven of these categories were present. Three of the categories, ‘interaction’, ‘maintenance’ and ‘emotional content’ were always found within the definitions studied and may indicate the core of theoretical interest in relationship marketing so far. To conclude which was the ‘best’ relationship marketing definition, Harker nominated Grönroos’s definition as it covered most of the categories encompassing a ‘broad’ view of the phenomenon and it was the most acceptable to the whole relationship marketing community.

According to Grönroos:

“Relationship marketing is to identify and establish, maintain and enhance and when necessary also to terminate relationships with customers and other stakeholders, at a profit, so that the objectives of all parties are met, and that this is done by a mutual exchange and fulfilment of promises.”

(Gronroos 1994)

Although considered the ‘best’ of the definitions collated, Harker sought to improve the existing definitions by ensuring that all seven aspects of relationship marketing were included and developed the following definition. A definition of ‘relationship’ was generated earlier in the chapter, in addition to this Harker’s definition of ‘relationship marketing’ is subscribed to within this research:

“An organisation engaged in proactively creating, developing and maintaining committed, interactive and profitable exchanges with selected customers {partners} over time is engaged in relationship marketing.”

(page 16)

As well as there being multiple definitions of relationship marketing, research into the phenomena can be categorised in a number of ways.

2.3.2 Categories of Relationship Marketing

The first category of research focuses around different relationship partners, for example:

- relationships between organisations;

- relationships between organisations and their consumers;
- relationships at the brand level;

(Iacobucci,1996; Macintosh and Lockshin,1997). Little work has been undertaken into relationships at the level of the brand. The paucity of research in the branding domain is highlighted in the work of Blackston (1993) and Fournier (1994) and this research seeks to contribute to the limited work undertaken at the brand level.

A second category of research considers how relationship marketing strategies come under several guises. Gordon et al (1998) classified three dimensions of relationship marketing tactics as:

Continuity where interaction between parties suggests an on-going nature, such as is found in frequent flyer programmes.

Individualisation where the marketing mix is customised to the individuals needs such as in targeted database marketing.

Personalisation where the product or service or both are personalised for the consumer and strategies are used to encourage relationships between staff and consumers.

Other classifications have been devised by Barnes (1994) and Brodie et al. (1997). The three levels of relationship marketing advanced by Barnes (1994) are:

- Relationship marketing as consumer retention – focus on keeping not getting consumers.

- Relationship marketing as locking the consumer into a pseudo relationship - through barriers to exit, social bonds and switching costs.
- Relationship marketing as database marketing to know as much as possible about the consumer – and targeting with differentiated messages.

Interestingly, Brodie et al (1997) looked at relationship marketing in terms of:

- ***Database marketing*** – a tool to manage consumers.

Focussing on relationships between a business and its consumer base with a view to retaining consumers - excluding relationships with suppliers or other partners.

- ***Consumer partnering*** -where there are dyadic relationships between the firm and its consumers –where the consumer is involved in the design and marketing of the product or service.

- ***A strategy incorporating everything in a ‘catch all’ phrase*** – including database marketing, loyalty programmes, internal marketing, social relationships and alliances.

Although these classifications do not tally perfectly, they do indicate the multiple uses of the term relationship marketing. These areas of research also tend to focus on the organisational side of the relationship and appear to view relationship marketing as something organisations ‘do’ to passive consumers. The majority of research consequently focuses almost exclusively on the organisational perspective with little attention paid to the consumer’s role in the relationship or to the relationship itself.

When a comparison is made between the classifications of relationship marketing and the working definition of the term 'relationship', it is not clear how far relationship principles can be applied to relationship marketing. Harker's seven conceptual categories of relationship marketing include a category for emotional content with expressions of commitment, trust and promises. These concepts play an important role in building relationships with consumers (Bitner, 1995) however apart from Brodie et al's (1997) non-descript 'catch all phrase' category, they do not appear within the classifications.

Some researchers have questioned the extent that relationship marketing strategies contribute to building strong relations between organisations or brands and consumers (Barnes, 1994; Fournier et al ,1998). Long term customer loyalty, which the strategies are designed to build, is jeopardised when relationship principles are not adhered to.

2.4 THE EXTENT TO WHICH RELATIONSHIP MARKETING ENCOURAGES RELATIONSHIPS

Incorporating the social psychology and personal relationships literature fuels the argument that the fundamental meaning of a 'relationship', is rarely observed in relationship marketing strategies (Fournier, 1998; Bagozzi, 1995; Barnes, 1994; Sheaves, 1996). These strategies have little to do with building genuine relationships (Barnes, 1994) and have been criticised for bombarding consumers into unequal partnerships. Collating detailed personal information and targeting direct mail are cited as reasons for the development of one-way relationships (Fournier et al,1998). Sometimes rules governing relationships are broken for

example by abusing trust by selling customer details to other companies (Fournier, 1998). Although it is not always necessary to maintain an on-going dialogue it is important to do more than encourage regular contact or rewarding customers for patronage (Gronroos, 1997). Like interpersonal relationships, an element of warmth and intimacy is required for consumer-brand relationships to thrive (Sheaves, 1996). Both Barnes (1994) and Fournier (1994) recommend following Argyle and Henderson's (1984) four rules of relationships which are;

- respect privacy
- look the other person in the eye (implies honesty)
- keep confidences
- do not criticise publicly

Fournier et al (1998) observed that relationships between companies and customers are troubled because customers are subjected to a manipulative market place. These marketplaces leave customers feeling trapped, victimised, confused and stressed. Feelings such as these can destroy relationships and it is apparent that loyalty based strategies do not automatically foster strong, committed associations.

Researchers have frequently applied metaphors such as marriage to aid understanding of relationship marketing. Tynan (1997) argued, however, that the marriage metaphor has outlived its usefulness because in the 'real world' relationships are sometimes dysfunctional. She suggested appropriate metaphors for relationship marketing should include stalking, rape, prostitution, polygamy

and seduction to describe the full range of relationships between an organisation and its customers. These metaphors indicate that the relationship between an organisation and its customers is not always positive and efforts of a relational programme do not always promote loyalty.

2.4.1 The customer's perspective in relationship marketing

The customer's perspective has recently become more popular within the relationship marketing literature. Customers are believed to be responsible for whether or not a relationship can exist and the form it takes. Barnes (1994) argued that different individuals have different relationship thresholds and so what one customer considers a relationship another may not. He also looked at the 'closeness' of relationships, which varies according to the nature of interactions. Frequent face to face contact where there are mutual interests and goals between customers and companies encourage close relationships. Infrequent contact, on the other hand, threatens closeness, particularly when interactions are dependent on computer networks and technology. As the customer's perception of the relationship is often beyond the firm's control (Sheaves, 1996), even a series of frequent and regular interactions may not be regarded as a relationship by the customer (Barnes, 1997). Circumstances are further complicated because customers are also likely to demand different relationships with different companies (Sheaves, 1996). 'Closeness gaps' can exist where customers perceive the relationship as either too close or not close enough (Barnes, 1997) and so customer satisfaction needs to be monitored to ensure an appropriate relationship approach (Gronroos, 1997).

When customers' expectations of a relationship are not fulfilled they may terminate the relationship. Bitner (1995) noted that customers sometimes terminate relationships even when they are satisfied with a good or service. Jones and Sasser (1995) hypothesised that there are two types of loyalty. Firstly, true long term loyalty and secondly, false loyalty that is built by high switching costs, government regulations, and proprietary technology but also so called loyalty programs built under the guise of relationship marketing. The authors suggested that when customers are 'free to choose', they will act like they are in highly competitive markets. In this situation, only the 'rock solid' loyal customers who are totally satisfied remain (Jones and Sasser, 1995). The authors put this forward as a proposition for why customers defect when they have exhausted airmiles. It also implies that the relationship between satisfaction and loyalty is not linear nor simple (Jones and Sasser, 1995). Although they did not empirically test their theory, Jones and Sasser (1995) insightfully classified customers into four categories according to their characteristics, they are;

The Loyalist – completely satisfied and keeps returning, usually become apostles for the company and have faith when bad instances are well recompensed.

The Defector and Terrorist – who can become unreasonable unhappy customers where bad experiences will be increasingly distorted and told to others.

The Mercenary – is totally satisfied yet demonstrates no loyalty and thus is expensive to acquire and quick to depart due to impulse purchase motivations and variety seeking behaviour

The Hostage – a customer who is stuck with the company who is very expensive to serve and takes every opportunity to complain and thus devastated employee morale.

The categories demonstrate that some situations arise where it is not profitable for the company to be in a relationship with certain customers and if possible the alliance should be avoided or terminated. It also suggests that relationship-marketing strategies should be fully justified with respect to the market conditions. In addition, it could be considered unethical for consumers to be forced into relationships they do not feel comfortable with. Different relationship strategies are required with different customer segments as customers tend to be either loyalty prone or deal prone (Berry, 1995).

Each type of interpersonal relationship has special properties and associated rules (Argyle, 1984). Relationship components identified as important to partners vary according to the type of relationship and it's stage of development (Duck, 1987; Glenn, 1990; Hendrick, 1984; Hinde, 1979; Johnson, 1989). The relationship components that should be included within relationship marketing strategies need investigation to understand how appropriate relationships are built and maintained.

2.4.2 Required relationship components

Relationship-inducing tactics should contain elements that increase a person's liking for something or someone as, to initiate a relationship, one of the parties has to offer an attractive proposition and crucially they have to be liked. These 'likeable' elements were discussed by Bennett (1996) and include most importantly trust and warmth but also the ease and frequency of interactions, propinquity, similarity, mutuality, goal interdependence and peer group norms (Bennett, 1996).

2.4.2.1 Trust and Warmth

Trust is a central concept to relationship marketing which should be at the heart of the management of relationships (Berry, 1995; Beckett-Carmarata, 1998). This is because trust reduces perceived risk in decision making and is essential to build lasting relationships (Gurviez, 1997). As outlined in the previous section, to customers, relationship marketing must mean more than ensuring regular contact or rewarding for patronage, they need to feel an amount of 'give and take' along with warmth and intimacy (Sheaves and Barnes, 1996). Quite often, intimacy is viewed by companies to be one sided and concerned with how much intimate information can be gained about the customer without disclosing details about the company. Research into personal relationships has shown that self-disclosure leads to greater intimacy as it allows individuals to understand each other better (Hinde, 1979). It also means there is a greater risk of being exploited and so trust is only possible where participants in a relationship have a moral code that minimises the risks of disclosure (Hunt, 1997). Self-disclosure occurs gradually (Argyle, 1984; Duck, 1997; Hinde, 1979) and is linked to the need to allow

relationships to develop slowly over time. Hunt (1997) argued that good relationships take time to develop and should only be entered when firms are in a position to fulfil their promises. The need for time to allow relationships to develop has also been highlighted as effecting levels of commitment. Depth of commitment varies over time and attractive alternatives, which threaten commitment, become less appealing over time (Johnson, 1989). As relationships develop attributes desired in a partner change. Hinde (1979) indicated that the attribute 'attractiveness' has primary importance at the beginning of some personal relationships but over time the importance of this attribute is diminished. Sternberg (1986) also recognises the importance of allowing time for relationships to develop. The grounds for Sternberg's (1986) point are that it is difficult to be with someone over time and not develop some emotional bond.

2.4.2.2 Ease and frequency of interactions

Ensuring a regular flow of information can lead the customer to become familiar with the organisation. Familiarity increases liking and the relationship becomes more comfortable for the persons involved (Bennett, 1996). Although it is not always necessary to maintain an ongoing dialogue with customers, companies should show genuine concern for the customers' welfare in the longer term to maintain positive relations. Latent relationships always exist between a firm and its customers although they are not always activated; customers are pleased that the opportunity exists if they should choose to (Gronroos, 1997).

2.4.2.3 Propinquity (Closeness)

By ensuring physical or psychological closeness relationships are likely to be strengthened. Barnes (1997) argued that propinquity is significantly related to other important relationship factors, including: relationship strength; relationship satisfaction; emotional tone; and closeness gap. This argument may be related to Sternberg's (1986) assertion that emotional bonds develop when time is spent with someone (something).

2.4.2.4 Similarity

Personal relationships research has shown that partners who define the relationship similarly and are mutually involved are more likely to progress (Hinde, 1979). Traditionally marketing has relied on the strategy of segmenting consumers, targeting the most profitable groups and positioning their brand to reach these groups. This process is still vital relationship marketing, as consumers like products that are similar to themselves (Aaker, 1997). Similar attitudes can lead to the customer trusting the company and treating its offers with greater respect (Bennett, 1996).

2.4.2.5 Mutuality

Bennett (1996) also argued that customers who believe they are highly valued by a company are more likely to enter a long-term relationship. The human tendency to repay favours means that the receipt of an extra benefit from a company may cause the consumer to feel obliged to do something in return. This is important for relationship marketing as many initiatives involve some

participation on the part of the customer who do the marketers work for them such as helping to design products (Sheth and Paravatiyar, 1995; Gordon, McKeage et al 1998).

2.4.2.6 Goal interdependence

Trust and bonding may depend on the extent to which customers believe they need the firm's support to attain personal goals. Firms should therefore emphasise their ability to help customers achieve such goals. Goal interdependence is also likely to influence the level of consumer involvement with the product. Consumers are likely to be highly involved with products that contribute meaning to their lifestyles and more receptive to invitations to enter a relationship (Fournier, 1996). Due to involvement that relationship marketing is considered to be more effective in some product categories than others. Gordon et. al.(1998) believed that relationship-inducing tactics might be very effective for product categories such as cars and designer clothes, where consumers are highly involved but that greater caution should be taken in product categories like groceries where there is low involvement and tactics may be perceived as invasive or annoying.

2.4.2.7 Peer group norms

Organisations, which seek to conform to the customer's dominant culture, stand a better chance of being liked than others. Firms should therefore display and emphasise characteristics considered desirable by society (Bennett, 1996). Consumers exist within societies where they do not enter relationships in

isolation, but they define themselves and act in relation to others around them. Bagozzi (1995) states that individuals have two forms of desire, intrinsic and mimetic desires. Intrinsic desires are at the core of the (individualistic) self-concept and entail a progressive sequence of stages in moral growth. Mimetic desires are constructed jointly with others but these are usually short lived and die once the consumer is removed from the social situation. As intrinsic and mimetic desires have relevance to customer satisfaction, they are important for relationship marketing. Bagozzi suggests that firms that are able to transform mimetic desires (which can diminish) to intrinsic desires (which are enduring) will build more enduring relationships with customers.

The elements of 'likeability' as outlined above tend to be addressed within the relationship marketing literature yet in marketing practice they are not very often applied (Earp et al, 1999).

2.5 CONCLUSIONS

Within this chapter definitions were reviewed for the terms 'relationship' and 'relationship marketing'. From these definitions it is then possible to determine whether or not relationship principles can be applied within marketing. Although it has been shown that it is possible to apply relationship principles to marketing, in reality strategies tend to be applied that build unbalanced partnerships. From reviewing the relationship marketing literature several important gaps can be identified. The first is a lack of studies focussing on brand level relationships. Secondly there is a shortage of research into the consumer's perspective. A third

gap exists which focuses on the relationship itself and the actions and interpretations of the relationship partners. This research aims to contribute to knowledge by taking a step towards filling these gaps.

CHAPTER THREE

BRAND LEVEL RELATIONSHIPS

3.1. INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter it was shown that research into brand level relationships within the relationship marketing literature was limited, this chapter will build upon the paucity of work. The chapter begins by investigating the concept of the brand as a partner. Brands can become relationship partners in the same way that parasocial relationships develop. Brand personality is particularly important to consumer-brand relationships as it is a powerful method of appealing to target customers and building strong relationships. The brand as a partner can be likened to a puppet with the organisation pulling its strings to provide animation. Organisational strategy, culture, brand strategy and positioning determine the brand's actions and will be considered within this chapter. After establishing how brands are able to act as partners the chapter moves to consider the possible forms of relationship that may develop. The quality of relationships is also discussed. As Fournier (1994) was one of the early researches in this area who had a dominant impact on thinking, the chapter draws heavily on her work. The chapter closes by considering how the concept of consumer-brand relationships supersedes traditional brand loyalty measures and research.

3.2. THE CONCEPT OF THE BRAND AS A PARTNER

Although the concept of the brand as a relationship partner has been addressed within the branding literature, the focus of attention was indirect. Often the notion was used as a way of justifying a line of reasoning in relation to another branding topic. Authors also used the concept of brand level relationships but didn't explore how these relationships are possible. For example, both Ambler (1995) and Gurviez (1997) linked brand relationships with the concept of brand equity. Brand equity is believed to be a measure for the state of brand relationships at any one time (Ambler, 1995). Gurviez (1997) also defined brand equity as the brand's ability to maintain a lasting relationship with target customers. The result within academic research was that the construct label 'relationship' has frequently been applied to brands but not conceptualised (Court, 1997; Stephens, 1996).

Consumer-brand relationships are less noticeable than relationships at other levels such as between organisations or between organisations and their consumers. This may be because we are not used to using the term 'relationship' to apply to inanimate objects or collectives (Sheaves, 1996). It is easier to envisage having relationships with employees of a company, particularly in view of their tangible interactions, than it is for consumers to have relationships with corporate or line brands. As brand level relationships are less noticeable, the concept is more difficult to conceptualise and may be part of the reason for the paucity of research.

3.2.1. The development of consumer-brand relationship theory

Consumer-brand relationship theory stems from the works of Blackston (1993) and Fournier (1994). Fournier investigated relationships from a metaphorical perspective, using a love and marriage analogy to categorise the different types of consumer-brand relationships. Her work draws heavily on the personal relationships literature. The use of metaphorical relationships provides insight into several aspects of consumer behaviour, for example brand loyalty, product meaning and the symbolic consumption of brands. It can also help produce better targeted brand strategies (Fournier,1994). Since the publication of Fournier's (1994) thesis, some of her suggestions for further research have been addressed such as the investigation of relationship breakdown (Fajer, 1995). Fournier (1994) argued that although the concept of consumer-brand relationships could be observed in practice, the core construct was 'under-realised'. Within her own work she began to address this gap however no research has since focussed on the core construct.

The idea of consumers having relationships with brands according to Blackston (1993) is a readily understandable analogy. He stated that brand personality is widely accepted and consistent with life. People do not simply perceive one another's physical appearance and personality and then process this information but rather, they enter relationships. This is consistent with the work of King (1984) who argued that consumers choose their brands as they would choose their friends.

Recent work into human relationships involving partners with no tangible vitality, such as between fans and celebrities adds credibility to consumer-brand relationships theory (Fournier,1998). This work found that parasocial relationships are in many ways similar to social relationships (Cohen,1997). In his book 'Total Relationship Marketing', Gummesson (1999) outlined thirty marketing relationships and also recognised the role of parasocial relationships in building brand relationships. Parasocial relationships can develop because people like to identify with others in order to add meaning to their own lives (Cohen, 1997).

3.2.2. Why brand relationships develop

The formation of consumer-brand relationships can be linked to the motivations of people to enter relationships. The notion of relationships adding meaning to consumers' lives is important as they do not just choose brands, rather they choose lifestyles and product satisfaction is linked to lifestyle satisfaction (Fournier,1998). This reinforces the finding that consumers' choose brands according to combinations of their functional and emotional needs (Ambler,1997; Biel,1997; de Chernatony,1998; de Chernatony,1994). Park, Jaworski and MacInnis (1986) identified consumer's functional and symbolic needs. The authors asserted that functional needs relate to a specific and practical consumption problem. Symbolic needs relate to self-image and social identification. In terms of consumer behaviour, consumer-brand relationships provide insights about how consumers express themselves through interactions between consumer personality and brand personality (Aaker,1995) and how

purchase behaviour is related to self-image and brand image (Tidwell and Horgan,1992). It is evident that both parties seek information to understand the relationship. Just as relationships exist in the minds of consumers, so do brands which have no objective existence, simply being a collection of consumer perceptions (de Chernatony,1998; Fournier,1994). Duncan and Moriarty (1998) argued that everything a company does sends a brand message which consumers integrate into their brand relationships automatically. Organisations need to consider how they can more favourably manage the brand message integration. One way is by ensuring that the brand communications are more interactive and integrated with other marketing communications (Stephens, 1996). Relationship marketing tactics matched to consumers' needs may be an appropriate vehicle to achieve this.

Although limited attention has been paid to brand level relationships within the relationship marketing literature (Macintosh and Lockshin,1997; Gummesson, 1999), de Chernatony and Dall'Olmo Riley (1997) noted that:

“If brands have a personality then consumers may not just perceive them but also have relationships with them. As this relationship develops stronger bonds arise and repeat usage may occur which is where branding is the binding element of relationship marketing strategies” (page 19)

Brand personality is particularly relevant to the formation of consumer-brand relationships. According to Fournier (1998), for a brand to become a relationship partner it must surpass mere personification and ‘behave as an active member of

the dyad'. For this to happen, consumers must perceive brand personality after observing the way the brand behaves. The process is the same as the way human personalities are attributed because of observed behavioural traits (Aaker, 1995).

3.3. BRAND PERSONALITY

A brand has a personality of its own and it is through this metaphor that consumers are able to understand the brand (Kapferer,1997). Brand personality encourages the development of emotional bonds and meaning (Aaker and Fournier,1995; Court et al.,1997). The techniques used to instil a brand with personality are anthromorphization, personification, and imagery (Aaker,1997). Morris and Martin (2000) attributed the wide scale appeal of Ty's Beanie Baby soft toys to the manufacturers use of personification. By naming and providing a history and story to surround the toys, Ty are able to instil distinct personalities and strengthen the relationship between consumers and the Beanie Baby brand.

As relationships exist between two or more people who have their own individual personalities, the study of brand personality is at the core of consumer-brand relationships. Fournier (1994) stated that trait inferences about the brand are made, from which brand personality is actualised.

If brands are capable of becoming active partners in a relationship, whether this is at a line or corporate brand level, it is imperative to understand the parties involved. Solely evaluating brand personality or image overlooks the totality of the relationship with the consumer (Blackston,1993). Blackston (1993) followed by Fournier (1994) argued for the need to assess the dynamic relationships between brands and consumers. It is proposed that the consumer-brand

relationship concept is an extension of brand personality as people tend to make qualified statements about others personalities based on how they interact with each other. Blackston (1993) argued, that it is wrong to consider just what a consumer thinks of a brand, rather it is important to understand what the consumer thinks the brand thinks about them.

The introductory section of this chapter used the metaphor of the brand as a puppet. Many brands have benefited from characters in the form of puppets and cartoons. to instil a personality. Well known examples are Sugar Puffs' Honey Monster, Michelin's Bibbendum and Tetley's group of tea characters. Consumers are able to understand the characters' personalities because of the way the puppeteers or animators make them act. Even brands without mascots are animated and behave according to the way they are managed by marketers who define a strategy and positioning for the brand.

3.4. BRAND STRATEGY AND POSITIONING

Kapferer (1997) argued that brand strategy is too often mistaken for company strategy and that brand strategy should reflect the brand purpose or concept. He stated that brands are a direct consequence of the strategy of market segmentation and product differentiation. This means that the brand strategy should direct both the brand positioning and personality in order to achieve the desired objectives. This should occur at a different strategic level to that of the overall corporate strategy and will be influenced by the prevailing corporate culture. It is within the brand strategy that brand culture and identity are likely to emerge.

3.5. ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE AND STRATEGY

Within the consumer-brand relationship, organisational strategy and culture drive the nature and the direction of the brand. These are also key determinants of the brand's positioning (de Chernatony,1999). These elements combine, emitting brand messages to consumers who assess whether or not a relationship with that particular brand is significant or relevant to them. Brand identity is deeply rooted in the corporate culture (de Chernatony,1999; Biel,1997). Culture provides a set of values, which feed inspiration in brand management, and it also provides a link between the firm and the brand (Kapferer, 1997). Strategy exists within the confines of the organisational culture, which has a notable influence on the way the organisation seeks to build relationships.

Organisational culture will determine the form of relationship marketing effort and influence the success of any internal marketing. Bennett (1996) argues that organisational culture is critically important for relationship marketing because it shapes and defines managers' and employees' attitudes and behaviours towards consumers, providing guidelines about how relationships should be formed and maintained. This will stem from the national culture in which the organisation operates, the traditional culture of the sector within which a firm is operating (Brodie et al.,1997) and organisational norms. Hatch and Schultz (1997) argued that there has been a breakdown of the boundaries between the internal and external aspects of the organisation. By this they mean that previously there were few opportunities for contact between 'insiders' (i.e. employees) and 'outsiders'

(e.g. consumers) whereas now interaction between ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ has intensified. This has occurred due to initiatives such as networking and focussing on consumer service. Brannback (1997), in a similar argument, also stated that due to the advancement of technology changing the market place, consumers are now literally enshrined in the firm. The result of this change according to Hatch and Schultz (1997) means that culture, identity and image now;

“form three related parts of a system of meaning and sense making which defines an organisation to its various constituencies” (page 357).

These arguments therefore imply that the consumer has become part of an integrated meaning system.

Organisational culture is therefore an important area for consumer-brand relationships and should be recognised as such within research. This is because the extent to which an organisation manages its brand and the existence of any formal relationship marketing strategies will be entwined in organisational culture. The nature of the strategy to build relationships with consumers will determine the form of the relationship built and potentially the quality of that relationship.

3.6. BRAND RELATIONSHIP FORMS AND QUALITY

Just as there are different forms of interpersonal relationship, consumer-brand relationships differ in their characteristics. Fournier (1994) identified fourteen metaphorical relationship types based within the category of love and marriage. Individuals do not enter relationships with every other person that they meet and

the same is true of the brands they come into contact with. Just because a consumer uses a brand it does not mean that they automatically have a relationship with the brand.

3.6.1. Types of relationship

Fournier's typology of consumer-brand relationships was based on the rubrics of friendship, marriage and dark side relationships. The fourteen relationships can be seen in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1 Relationship Typology

RELATIONSHIP TYPOLOGY		
Friendship	Marriage	Dark Side relationships
Compartmentalised	Marriage of convenience	Dependencies
Childhood buddies	Committed Partnership	Enemyship
Best friends	Arranged Marriage	Enslavement's
Casual friends		Secret affairs
		Compulsive/addictive consumption

One of the strengths of the typology is that it doesn't exclude dark side relationships like many relationship marketing based studies. The inclusion of dark side relationships was advocated by Gordon (1994). The classification has led to a greater understanding of the types of relationship that can possibly exist and if this could be operationalised and measured quantitatively would allow

brand managers to target their brands to those where positive and profitable relationships exist. It enables an understanding beyond brand attitude, satisfaction, loyalty and brand personality (Fournier, 1996). The relationship types differ in terms of the structure of the relationship and the levels of loyalty and commitment. This means that they require different maintenance strategies and possibly do not all benefit from the same approach towards relationship development that the company may initiate.

3.6.2. Relationship quality

Within her research, Fournier (1994) qualitatively studied three female case studies with differing backgrounds in order to establish their life stories and how brands became meaningful and fitted into their lives. This led to the establishment of the fifteen brand types being identified before she proceeded to quantitatively develop a Brand Relationship Quality construct (BRQ hereafter). When revised the construct consisted of seven facets which are ;

1. **Partner Quality** – overall satisfaction with the brand as a partner through a brand evaluation in terms of ability, reliability and dependability which incorporates trust and faith in the brand.
2. **Love** - affective, emotional feelings expressed towards the brand as a relationship partner. Implies an affinity towards the brand with adoration and positive sentiments.
3. **Intimacy** – the feeling of closeness and knowledge about the brand with personal associations.

4. **Self-concept Connection** – strong connection between a brand image and the consumer's own self-identity concerns.
5. **Nostalgic Connection** – strong feeling of connection to ones past where nostalgic feelings can be transferred to new brand offerings.
6. **Personal Commitment** – the extent of loyalty within the relationship.
7. **Passionate Attachment** – concerns the degree to which the actions and reactions of the relationship partners are intertwined and ingrained in the consumer's daily life and separation anxiety exists when brand – person interactions are restricted.

The BRQ, Fournier argues, was the best starting place for an investigation of consumer-brand relationships and provides a consumer-based indicator of strength and depth of a person brand relationship. Where relationships arise, the type of relationship developed can determine the BRQ. This is because different types of relationships will score high or low on BRQ measurement scale (Fournier, 1994). The extent of these differences has not been empirically tested although attempts can be made to hypothesise how the individual facets of the BRQ will support different relationship types.

3.6.3. Why consumer-brand relationships are better than the concept of 'loyalty'

Brand loyalty is a controversial topic with both academics and practitioners registering its importance yet also it's complexity (Dick, 1994; Fournier, 1996).

Disagreements exist about different measurement approaches, which have considered satisfaction, liking, commitment, switching costs, or promises of repurchase (Aaker, 1991). With this plethora of measures (Dick, 1994) researchers appear to be split regarding the most reliable measure. Options include using either a stochastic approach or considering the purposive nature of repeat purchase (Fournier, 1996; Knox, 1995).

Equally different types of loyalty have become apparent adding to the complexity. Loyalty differs according to attitude strength and brand differentiation (Dick, 1994), whether it is true loyalty or false loyalty (Jones and Sasser, 1995), it depends on the customers disposition (Berry, 1995) and if they are predominantly habitual, loyal, variety seekers or switchers (Knox, 1997). Different segments and groups of customers tend to be either more or less loyal. Alsop (1989) noted that brand loyalty is generally stronger among older consumers and those with higher income levels.

Differences in loyalty have often led to the assumption that people are disloyal defectors if they try competitor's brands. In reality, consumers' have portfolios of brands, which they rotate between according their differing needs (Knox, 1997) within different contexts and times (Gordon, 1994). Rather than being 'promiscuous', relationships are cyclical and intermittent rather than continuous (Brown, 1992).

The relationship metaphor is able to account for brand repertoires recognising a range of potentially different relationships consumers can have with brands

within the consideration set. In everyday life people have an assortment of relationships within different contexts and situations and this is reflected within the metaphor. Gifford (1997) whilst reporting on the work of Fournier, states that in real life people relate to one another in a host of different ways and they also do this for the brands they use. To say a consumer is brand loyal is;

“like saying you will marry everyone you meet or they will never be a meaningful part of your life” (page 36)

King (1984) spoke metaphorically of personal relationships in neatly explaining how consumers choose brands as they would their friends;

“there are degrees of friendship, and people rarely stick exclusively to just one friend; in the same way there are degrees of brand loyalty, very rarely loyalty to one brand alone. Friendships come and go, according sometimes to what friends say and do. Not everyone will like the same person, some are more popular than others .” (page 12)

Just as King speaks of degrees of friendships, a range of relationships exist between consumers and brands some of which, are not necessarily positive. As stated in the relationship marketing review, the relationship between satisfaction and loyalty is complex if not flawed (Jones and Sasser, 1995; Pruden, 1996) and a limited relationship exists between commitment and repeat purchase (Knox, 1995).

As relationships are sought by companies in order to increase loyalty and thus profits, an understanding of the nature and type of relationship is paramount to the way it is maintained. Distinguishing between different consumers loyalty in terms of the relationship is more precise and considers a broader scope than the previous measures of loyalty (Fournier, 1994).

3.7. CONCLUSIONS

The chapter began by questioning the paucity of research at the level of the brand, particularly within the relationship marketing field. The reason was assumed to be partly because the notion is difficult to conceptualise. From there the basis for consumer-brand relationships was considered. Brand relationships were attributed to the contributions of brand personality, positioning and strategy and organisational strategy. Research into parasocial relationships, which has recently been included in the relationship marketing literature, has added credibility to the topic.

It was also suggested within the chapter that the motivations for consumers to enter consumer-brand relationships are the same as why people enter interpersonal relationships. A primary motivator is the search for a meaningful lifestyle.

Just as different types of interpersonal relationships exist, brand relationships also have multiple forms. Fournier's classification of these relationships, based on the rubrics of love, friendship and dark side relationships were explored along

with her BRQ facets. A gap worthy of investigation was identified which considers the quality of each relationship form.

The final section of the chapter attempted to justify why the concept of consumer-brand relationships supersedes the topic of brand loyalty. The main reason identified was that the relationship metaphor allows for a portfolio of brands to be assessed rather than being restricted to one favoured brand.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE CONSUMER'S ROLE WITHIN THE RELATIONSHIP

4.1. INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter the brand as a relationship partner was discussed. Within this chapter the brand's relationship partner, the consumer, will be investigated. Chapter two identified several gaps within the relationship literature. One such gap highlighted that most previous research has concentrated on either the brand or the consumer's role within a relationship. Interaction between parties can only be properly understood once both partners are investigated.

This chapter begins by looking at what motivates consumers to enter brand level relationships. Relationship marketing and interpersonal relationship literature has been studied to develop a holistic picture of these motivations. The chapter then moves to consider the role of personality as affecting the individuals behave towards their relationship partners. A dimension of personality known as 'attachment' is identified as being particularly relevant to relationships. Individuals develop attachment styles that determine both the types of relationship they are most comfortable with and the way they behave towards others. The extent to which attachment styles can be applied to consumer-brand relationships is discussed.

Self-concept, a psychological concept that has frequently been applied within consumer behaviour studies, is also relevant to consumer-brand relationships. Self-image is a component of self-concept and is developed both through interactions with others and socialisation (Soloman, 1992). It will also be covered within this chapter. Related to socialisation is culture. Thompson (1994) argued that it is important to understand consumers' cultural heritages in order to understand their life situations. As brands are purchased in order to help establish a particular lifestyle (Fournier, 1994) culture is clearly important to the study of consumer brand relationships.

The chapter indicates that to fully investigate any brand level relationship, consumer considerations are important. Understanding how consumers perceive a relationship within their lifestyle, personality and relationship needs can help to contribute to the success and meaning of any brand partnership.

4.2. CONSUMER MOTIVATIONS FOR ENTERING **RELATIONSHIPS**

The notion of individuals entering relationships to add meaning to their lives is consistent with consumer-brand relationships theory. From a personal relationships literature perspective, Dickson and Duck (1993) argued that people may develop relationships as a way of understanding symbols and developing a meaningful existence. Increasing the commonality of meanings of brands is the essence of relationship development. From the consumer's perspective Fournier (1996) noted that meanings are a relationship-motivating factor, are developed

through socio-cultural, psychological and relational contexts. An agreed definition of 'meaning' has yet to emerge within the relationship marketing and personal relationship literature. In the branding domain, Fournier (1994) proposed 'meaning' to represent centrally held identity issues or the resolution of salient identity concerns. It could be the case that the more meaningful the brand is to the consumer, the more entrenched in the consumer's daily life a brand will become. An analogy can be drawn with the way that the more meaningful a relationship is to an individual, the greater the role the relationship partner will play in their life. Besides the concept of meaning system development, other explanations as to why people enter relationships are proximity, need complementarity, similarity, reciprocity and availability (Hogg and Vaughan, 1995).

Bennett (1996) argued that relationship-inducing tactics should increase the ease and frequency of interactions, trust, warmth, propinquity, similarity, mutuality, and goal interdependence and peer group norms. These are elements which increase a person's liking for someone or something. Sheth and Parvatiyar (1995) suggested that the main reason why consumers enter relationships is to reduce uncertainty when faced with choice. They stated that consumers have a relationship with a brand to:

1. simplify their choice;
2. avoid risk;
3. reduce cognitive dissonance;
4. satisfy social influences;

Bagozzi(1995) was critical of Sheth and Paravatiyar, questioning whether the desire to reduce choice is actually a motive in itself or rather a consequence of entering a relationship. This, he argued, might be viewed as instrumental to goal achievement or actually desired as an end to itself. Fournier (1998) noted that in life only a few relationships can be characterised as being close and committed. Consumers can therefore only be expected to have a small number of relationships with companies. One of the reasons why relationships are likely to become close and committed arises from the fact that consumers dislike change and do not wish to incur switching costs when multiple brands are used (Bitner, 1995). Researching within the service sector setting, Bitner (1995) observed that long term relationships could lead to a sense of well being and increased quality of life through the provision of social support networks. Individuals differ according to their perception of closeness and commitment and their search for support networks. These dissimilarities may be due to personality differences.

4.3. PERSONALITY DIMENSIONS INFLUENCING **RELATIONSHIPS**

The measurement of consumer personality is an important component of consumer-brand relationships. Firstly it enables self –congruency, a subject often applied within the branding literature, to be investigated. Secondly, personality differences between consumers will influence the forms of relationships different types of consumer will enter. This will have implications for how relationships may best be maintained. It also can provide a powerful segmentation base for the management of brands. Within personal relationships, when different

individuals come together, relationships will be either strong and binding, or disastrous, depending on the compatibility of their personalities. The same could be true for consumer-brand relationships. Several aspects relating to consumer personality could affect the likelihood of a consumer-brand relationship forming, as well as determining the quality of that relationship and providing insights about the most appropriate ways of maintaining the profitability of a relationship.

In the marketing literature there has been debate about the measurement of consumer personality. Debate amongst researchers about the validity of consumer personality research has lessened and Foxall and Goldsmith (1990) maintained that consumer personality measurement is valuable and has much to offer marketing research. They argued that the basic notion that individuals differ from one another in systematic and stable patterns of behaviour and attitude is

“both intuitively appealing and very familiar to most observers” (page 113)

They noted the criticisms of consumer personality measurement and conceded that these stem from the fact that many psycho-dynamically-based studies were frequently misapplied in the marketing context. They argued there is now more emphasis on validity and reliability and that theory grounded typologies, which organise traits into dominant personality styles, are more successful than the previous single trait clinical applications.

The effect of different personality dimensions is important when considering consumer-brand relationships. Kapferer (1997) argued that brand targeting

strategies should project a flattering image of the consumer enabling the brand to reflect how the consumer would like to be seen, representing their ideal self image. If brands are not positioned to reflect an ideal self image, consumers are unlikely to regard them as being relevant to their needs and lifestyle, thus ignoring them from their consideration sets. Considering the wider ethical debate surrounding the deliberate manipulation of brand image to encourage consumption an important issue should be raised. If brands were not positioned at specific target consumers, then it would be very difficult for consumers to rely on brand messages as a shortcut device to decide whether they were relevant to their lifestyles or not (Ambler, 1997; Biel, 1997). Therefore it could be argued that such practices could be viewed as positive rather than detrimental to consumers.

4.4. SELF CONCEPT

Self-image is developed through interactions with others and a socialisation process (Solomon,1992). However, even so, when studying consumer-brand relationships it is not enough merely to investigate self-image, as it does not represent the totality of meaning behind consumption. Self-concept has attracted extensive research interest (Aaker,1995; Clairborne and Sirgy,1990) and is more comprehensive for the purpose of considering symbolic consumption. This is because it represents the composite of ideas, feelings and attitudes people have about themselves (Hilgard, Atkinson and Atkinson,1979) rather than just the image they have of themselves or wish to project.

Although there is ambiguity and confusion concerning the conceptualisation of self-concept in the consumer behaviour literature (Sirgy,1992), self concept studies generally take into account the existence of multiple selves (Clairborne and Sirgy,1990). Researchers have used various combinations of these multiple selves and distinguish between actual self, ideal self, social self, expected self, ought self, situational self, desired self, feared self and undesired self. Accepting its complexity, the self is a structure representing the core of personality, and it encompasses the values, roles, goals and memories of oneself (Aaker,1995) and as such is most relevant when considering brand level relationships.

Brands enable consumers to project aspects of their self-concept (de Chernatony and McDonald,1998) and they prefer brands with images congruent with their self (de Chernatony and Benicio de Mello,1995; Laird Landon,1974; Solomon,1992; Sirgy, 1992). When studying the effects of self-congruency within the context of brand personality, Aaker (1995) postulated that preference for a brand is a function of 'self factors'(personality traits that the consumer believes are descriptive and important), and 'situational factors'(perceived behavioural norms in the situation) and the interaction between these two represents the consumer's 'working self concept'. 'Working self-concept' is accessible in any situation and contains self-concepts that are active in thought and memory. This 'working self concept' also relates to the consumer's brand awareness set. When a purchase need arises, consumers scan their memory of suitable brands within the product class. The brand with a personality which is closest to the working self-concept, for that specific situation, is selected (Aaker and Fournier, 1995). Working self concept provides a link between self-concept

and consumers personality which, is based on dominant traits and represents the psychological characteristics that determine how a consumer behaves and responds to his or her environment (Solomon, 1992; Hilgard, Atkinson and Atkinson, 1979). Examining the links between self congruency and the personal relationships literature illustrates that seeking similarity between self concept and brand image occurs as relationships develop (Duck, 1987). The more similarities consumers perceive, the greater the communicative efficiency of the relationship (Dixson and Duck, 1993).

In addition, considering the self and personality is important in consumer-brand relationships as it can account for why different people seek different meanings in their possessions (Richens, 1994). Individuals also display different search and involvement patterns (Midgley, 1983, Solomon, 1992), respond differently to perceived risk (Solomon, 1992) and are not uniformly susceptible to interpersonal influence (Midgley, 1983).

As consumer personality is likely to play a role in the development and perception of consumer-brand relationships, a reliable measure to establish the extent of the influence of personality is required. As personality is a multidimensional construct with many measures, a relationship specific approach would be more appropriate for the study of consumer-brand relationships.

Preferences for different types of relationships, behaviour towards partners and attitudes and opinions about love and relationships can be ascribed to personality. People differ in the way they become attached to others and experience

relationships and this can be explained by variations in their attachment style (Hazan, 1987).

4.5. ATTACHMENT STYLE

Individuals approach relationships with a specific frame of reference which can be governed by their inherent style of attachment which develops during childhood socialisation. Determined by the behaviour and responsiveness of carers (usually parents), infants develop mental models of themselves which can then be related to the way they attach to others and approach future relationships (Hazan, 1987; Cohen, 1997; Simpson, 1990). These styles of attachment evolve throughout one's life and become increasingly complex (Cohen, 1997). They provide the basis for one's adult, intimate and romantic relationships (Hazan, 1987; Simpson, 1990). Fournier (1994) briefly reviewed attachment styles and indicated that they were relevant to consumer-brand relationships. However, incorporating attachment style was outside the boundaries of Fournier's research programme. This means that their potential effects on consumer-brand relationships were not empirically tested and remains an area worthy of investigation.

A person's attachment style becomes central to personality and leads to the development of mental models of the self, and influences behaviour patterns (Hazan, 1987; Cohen, 1997). The mental models exert pervasive influence on individuals' relationship with others. They reflect views about the rewards and

dangers of entering relationships and are particularly salient in the context of intimate relationships. Interaction goals are formed and determine behaviour.

Individuals can be classified according to whether they demonstrate *secure*, *anxious* or *avoidant* attachment styles. These three distinct attachment styles can account for why people experience relationships differently (Hazan, 1987). Individuals develop only one of the three attachment styles. Each style is distinct rather than being a point along a continuum (Hazan, 1987). This means that an individual is thought to attach to relationships according to the characteristics which are consistent with their particular style of attachment. He/she will be either secure, anxious or avoidant and will not exhibit characteristics from an alternative attachment style. All forms of relationship are approached with the same characteristics and are not influenced by the attachment style of the relationship partner.

Attachment styles have been found to meaningfully relate to the 'Big Five' of human personality traits (Shaver, 1992) and self-concept (Bylsma, 1997). The 'Big Five' personality traits were incorporated by Jennifer Aaker (1995) into her brand personality measurement scale because of their consistent validity and reliability. The personality traits are: agreeableness; openness; conscientiousness; neuroticism and extraversion. The three attachment styles have not been found to be redundant within the 'Big Five'. This is because the facets of the personality traits are intentionally general whilst attachment style constructs are relationship specific (Shaver, 1992).

Attachment styles have been studied with respect to their effect on parasocial relationships (Cohen, 1997), extent of self-disclosure (Mikulincer, 1991), self-esteem (Bylsma, 1997), partner choice and preference (Latty-Mann, 1996). People use their attachment styles to think about their symbolic relationships (Cohen, 1997), and so they are particularly relevant to the study of consumer-brand relationships.

It has consistently been found among U.S samples that the majority of individuals demonstrate a secure attachment style while the remainder are equally distributed between the two insecure styles (Bylsma, 1997). There is no reason to believe that this will be different in the UK samples and research in the UK has frequently been based on this expected distribution. Each style demonstrates unique characteristics which are representative of individuals' attachment histories (Hazan, 1987). They also enable one to predict levels of intimacy, passion, commitment, satisfaction and approaches to conflict (Latty-Mann, 1996) within relationships.

The characteristics associated with each attachment style can be appreciated from a comprehensive review of the literature.

4.5.1. Characteristics of Secure Attachment Style

Secure individuals demonstrate high levels of stability, intimacy, passion, trust, commitment, interdependence and satisfaction within relationships (Simpson, 1990; Hazan, 1987; Latty-Mann, 1996; Feeney, 1990; Levy, 1988). Secure people endorse a 'love as friendship' attitude (Latty-Mann, 1996; Feeney, 1990).

They find it easy to get close to others, feel comfortable depending on others and having others depend on them and do not worry about being abandoned, or someone becoming emotionally too close (Simpson, 1990). Their pattern of self-disclosure is governed by their interaction goal of becoming close and intimate. They are prone to disclose information (to lovers first, then friends and finally parents) and appreciate information about others (Mikulincer, 1991). They also believe that romantic feelings can wax and wane and that sometimes feelings can reach the same intensity as experienced at the start of the relationship while some romantic love never fades (Hazan, 1987). Due to their high levels of security they cope more effectively with negative occurrences within relationships (Simpson, 1990) and are able to support partners despite their faults (Hazan, 1987). They approach conflict with a compromising and integrating style (Levy, 1988). Peers describe them as more ego resilient, less anxious and less hostile (Simpson, 1990). They have high levels of self-confidence. This results in positive and self-assured interactions with others, along with greater self-esteem than anxious and avoidant people (Feeney, 1990). Secure people have mental models of themselves as easy to get to know and likeable (Simpson, 1990; Hazan, 1987). They tend to think that others are well intentioned, good hearted (Hazan, 1987), reliable and trustworthy (Simpson, 1990). Overall, secure individuals' relationships tend to endure for longer (Hazan, 1987; Feeney, 1990) and this correlates with the fact that there is a lower rate of divorce among secure people (Shaver, 1992).

4.5.2. Characteristics of an Anxious Attachment Style

Anxious individuals easily and frequently fall in love, although they rarely find 'true' love. Anxious people find themselves in love situations involving obsession, desire for reciprocation and union with emotional highs and lows (Hazan, 1987). Love can be described as neurotic rather than friendship love (Feeney, 1990). They experience lower levels of intimacy, viability, care, communication and satisfaction in relationships (Latty-Mann, 1996) as partners are less willing and able to commit to the relationship (Hazan, 1987; Simpson, 1990). Self-disclosure is high among anxious individuals. Motivations to disclose derive from the desire to break boundaries and meet security needs. Unlike secure people, they are more likely to reveal information to mothers and friends than lovers. This is due to their lack of trust in partners and their vulnerability in romantic relationships (Mikulincer, 1991). Anxious people are preoccupied with issues surrounding partner's predictability, dependability and trustworthiness, which reduces closeness and commitment of their partners and peers, describe them as less ego resilient and more anxious (Simpson, 1990). They also believe that romantic feelings can wax and wane but unlike secure people, they behave ambivalently towards partners. They generate high levels of conflict where resolution is sought through domination rather than compromise (Levy, 1988). Anxious people have many self doubts and feel misunderstood and under appreciated (Hazan, 1987). They demonstrate a very low self-esteem (Bylsma, 1997). These extreme self-deficits mean that love and acceptance from another individual may become particularly meaningful (Bylsma, 1997). Anxious individuals have the least enduring relationships and higher levels of divorce (Feeney, 1990; Shaver, 1992).

4.5.3. Characteristics of an Avoidant Attachment Style

Avoidant individuals demonstrate a fear of intimacy (Hazan, 1987) and their main goal is to avoid intimacy (Feeney, 1990) finding it uncomfortable being close to others. This is due to the difficulty they have in trusting and depending on others (Simpson, 1990). Avoidant people fall between the extremes of secure and anxious characteristics although their mental models are more readily likened to anxious types (Hazan, 1987). Avoidant people believe that 'head over heels' love doesn't really exist, that romantic love seldom lasts, it is rare to find a person to fall in love with and that others are too eager to commit (Hazan, 1987). This is reflected in emotionally distant relationships, which are characterised by lower levels of trust, interdependence, communication, satisfaction and passion (Latty-Mann, 1996; Simpson, 1990). They avoid conflict and when necessary manage it with a compromising and integrating style (Levy, 1988). Peers describe avoidant people as less ego resilient, more anxious and more hostile (Simpson, 1990). As the interaction goal of avoidant people is to maintain distance from others, they are unwilling to disclose information. If they do disclose personal details it is likely to be for opposite sex friends. These relationships are not usually as close as same sex friendships or romantic relationships (Mikulincer, 1991). Avoidant individuals' relationships lack commitment and tend to be very short lived or 'one night stands' (Hazan, 1987; Feeney, 1990). Enduring committed partnerships are rare among avoidant individuals.

4.5.4. The relationship between attachment style and behaviour towards partners

Research into love styles enables predictions about the behaviour of individuals based on their attachment style. Levy and Davis (1988) identified a relationship between attachment styles and Lee's (1973) love styles. Lee (1973) identified three primary types of love which are *eros* a romantic love, *ludus* a game playing love and *storge* a friendship love. He also identified three secondary love styles, which are *mania*, a possessive dependent love, *pragma*, a logical 'shopping list' love and *agape*, an all giving selfless love (Hendrick, 1984). Levy and Davis found that secure attachment styles correlated with the *eros* and *agape* love styles, the anxious attachment styles, with *mania* love style and the avoidant attachment style with the *ludus* love style. These findings were consistent with the researchers' expectations given the characteristics of the love styles (Levy, 1988). The characteristics of the love styles are ;

eros – high levels of intimacy, passion , commitment, satisfaction and concern for partner's welfare promote a compromising integrating and obliging conflict management.

agape – higher levels of intimacy, viability, care, commitment, passion, satisfaction with low levels of conflict and ambivalence again with a concern for partners welfare leading to integrating and compromising in conflict situations

mania – very high passion and an obliging approach to conflict

ludus – has lower levels of intimacy, viability, passion, commitment, love and satisfaction, with higher conflict-ambivalence and a tendency to dominate.

How individuals behave within different forms of relationship may be understood through a combination of their attachment style and the findings of Levy and Davis's (1988) love style characteristics. As individuals are said to perceive all relationships in light of their attachment style, then it is possible that they will perceive their brand relationships in this manner also. With love styles enabling the behavioural traits associated with each style of attachment to be understood, it is worth investigating whether attachment affects behaviour towards brand partners.

It was noted earlier within this section that attachment styles are initially developed through the socialisation process. Socialisation and culture are equally important to the study of consumer-brand relationships because they provide a frame of reference through which consumers may interpret brand relationship offerings.

4.6. SOCIALISATION AND CULTURE

Factors such as national cultural norms and consumers' socialisation influence relationships. Cultural norms affect: perceptions of the amount of time and effort invested in the relationship in order to signify affection (Baxter et al.,1997); what personal attributes of a relationship partner matter to individuals at different stages of the relationship (Hinde,1979); and loyalty to a relationship (Johnson

and Rusbult,1989). Each party's frame of reference, developed through socialisation, determines the perception of the relationship marketing strategies and perceived 'closeness gap'. Consumers' cultural heritages help to explain their life situations (Thompson et al.,1994). This is because relationship marketing offers have meaning for the target consumers, within the contexts of the recipients' mindsets, sentiments and individual backgrounds (Bennett,1996). Brands purchased and used reinforce meaningful lifestyle patterns. Where common purchase priorities are unique to particular cultures, this enables consumer segmentation based on the grouping of shared characteristics, needs and goals (Fournier et al.,1992).

4.7. CONCLUSIONS

The chapter began by considering consumer motivations for entering relationships. The interpersonal relationships and relationship marketing literature was covered. On the whole, the major motivation, which is particularly relevant within the branding domain, is the need to provide a meaningful existence.

Personality affects individuals' perception' of relationships, in particularly how brand relationships are relevant to consumers' self concepts.

Attachment style, which is a dimension of personality, influences the way individuals perceive relationships. To establish whether there is any effect on consumer-brand relationships further research is required. Whether or not

consumer satisfaction and behaviour within brand relationships is a function of their style of attachment is worthy of investigation.

The closing section of the chapter encouraged the reader to remember that consumer-brand relationships exist within the confines of a cultural environment. Cultural variations will determine the attitudes and behaviours of consumers in their relationships with brands.

CHAPTER FIVE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR CONSUMER-BRAND RELATIONSHIPS

5.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims to supplement and draw together the previous three chapters. The previous chapters had separately considered the roles of consumers and brands within relationships and the perception of relationships in marketing. In order to contribute to marketing knowledge in the area of consumer-brand relationships an empirically testable theory is required. This chapter sets out the theory to be tested and justifies its worthiness for investigation based on what has been established within the previous chapters. Kerlinger (1964) argued that scientific research is empirical and that theory is the ultimate aim of science. He defined theory as:

“A theory is a set of interrelated constructs (concepts), definitions, and propositions that present a systematic view of phenomena by specifying relations among variables, with the purpose of explaining and predicting the phenomena” (page 9)

If we study Kerlinger’s definition of theory for a moment, the interrelated constructs (concepts) of consumer-brand relationship theory at a broad level are: the consumer; the brand; and the type of relationship between them. To aid

theory development, the rationale for studying both consumers and brands within an investigation of consumer-brand relationships will be considered. Once the rationale for covering these broad concepts is covered, a theoretical model will be developed. The theoretical model will consider the relations between the sub-constructs within the consumer, brand and relationship. Following on from the model, the chapter will establish propositions that attempt to further explain the consumer-brand relationship phenomena. The propositions take the form of empirically testable hypotheses. These broadly relate to: the quality of different relationship forms; the effect of consumer personality; and the effect of relationship marketing strategies on relationship quality. To ensure that the outlined theory is accounted for within the propositions, the chapter will finish by showing how the hypotheses relate to the theoretical model.

5.2. THE NEED TO INVESTIGATE BOTH CONSUMERS AND BRANDS

When investigating consumer-brand relationships both partners should be considered. Interactions between partners play a role in the nature and quality of the relationship and unless both parties are investigated the interaction will not be understood. As stated in earlier chapters, a brand can be interpreted as a collection of consumer perceptions and so researchers need to understand how these are developed through brand actions and consumer interpretations. By definition, brand personality is inextricably linked to building the brand 'as a person' and consumers are more likely to enter relationships with brands they perceive as being similar to themselves and their 'working self concepts'. 'Working self concept' is dependent on the purchase and usage context which

links with Fournier's (1994) arguments that consumers will not develop relationships with all of the brands with which they come into contact but rather with just a small proportion of these. Within a service setting, Sheaves and Barnes (1996) noted that consumers are likely to want different relationships with different service providers. These issues highlight that consumers will not enter relationships with all brands and the relationships that they seek will differ according to their relationship preferences and perceptions of the brand as a relationship partner.

Grönroos (1997) argued that latent relationships are always present and that some consumers will choose to activate these whilst others will not. Consumers who do not build on a relationship are still pleased that a relationship opportunity has been provided and this increases the brand's value in their minds (Grönroos, 1997). Berry (1995) also noted that some people are more deal prone and others loyalty prone so it may be more profitable to target certain consumers on a transactional basis. The effectiveness of relationship marketing tactics differs by individuals and the purchase likelihood for some individuals decreases in the presence of certain tactics (Gordon et al., 1998). This implies that different consumers will have different relationships with different brands and will perceive relationship inducing strategies and brand messages in the context of the relationship they have with a brand. Fournier's (1994) 14 metaphorical relationships demonstrate this. Individuals may enter a whole host of relationships such as committed partnerships, flings, enemyships etc, and tactics that may prove successful in one relationship may be totally inappropriate in another. Strategies therefore, cannot be uniform across all relationship types and

various brand personalities will be more or less acceptable within different relationships. This appears plausible, given the idea of self-congruency and differences found in brand loyalty literature (Alsop, 1989; Berry, 1995; Jones and Earl Sasser; 1995; Knox, 1997) where consumers have been categorised according to their patterns of loyalty. To date there has been no empirical testing to establish whether certain individuals are more likely to enter specific relationship types and under what conditions. To investigate an area such as this, all factors that contribute to the relationship should be incorporated into a research programme. It is important that both partners and the form of relationship are expressed clearly and are sufficiently represented within research so that the nature of interactions can be better understood. Theoretical models serve the function of focussing conceptual frameworks and are particularly important within this research as multiple concepts are involved. Conceptual frameworks show hypothesised interrelationships and are best done graphically rather than in text (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Miles and Huberman (1994) believed this was because:

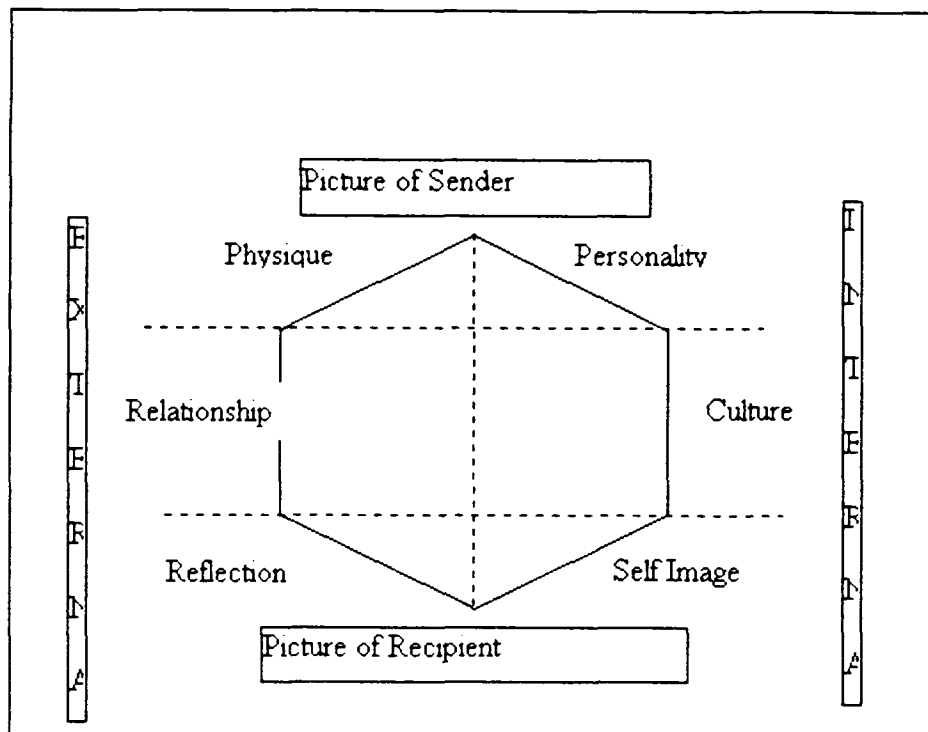
“having to get the entire framework on a single page obliges you to specify the bins that hold the discrete phenomena, to map likely relationships, to divide variables that are conceptually or functionally distinct, and to work with all the information at once” (page 22)

In the branding arena, de Chernatony and Dall’Olmo Riley (1997) advocated the use of models. They stated that brands are gaining more attention among both practitioners and academics where models simplify brand complexity into a small number of parts.

5.3. THEORETICAL MODEL DEVELOPMENT

Miles and Huberman (1994) gave advice about getting started when trying to formulate conceptual frameworks and models. One suggestion was to map variables and relationships onto existing models from available literature to see where overlaps, contradictions, refinements and qualifications are. As there is little previous research into consumer-brand relationships, an existing theoretical model, which concentrated on brand level relationships, was not forthcoming. However, the wider branding domain offered ample choice of models. Kapferer's (1996) Prism of Brand Identity provided a good model from which a consumer-brand relationship specific model could develop. Kapferer has taken a comprehensive approach to the brand and supports the notion of brands having relationships with customers (McWilliam, 1993). It is an acknowledged model of branding and includes the totality of brand essence. Kapferer identified both the core of the brand, which must remain permanent, and what must evolve within a brand strategy. A significant point for the study of consumer-brand relationships is that Kapferer's prism operates from a metaphorical perspective with the brand being considered a living entity and possessing an identity. He stated that the prism derives from one basic concept – that brands have the gift of speech and can only exist if they communicate.

Figure 5.1 Kapferer's (1996) Prism of Identity



All facets in the model are interrelated and form a well-structured brand entity (Kapferer, 1996). Kapferer (1996) provided explanations for each of the components within the model. Although some of these explanations are covered within Chapter three, to recap they will be covered again now. This will enable the suitability of the Prism of Brand Identity in forming a new model to be assessed.

Physique

This area of the prism refers to a traditional positioning strategy and the physical product or service and its attributes. It is a combination of either salient or emerging objective features and provides the brands backbone and added value (Kapferer, 1997). It represents the product type and whether it is a tangible product or service brand. These concepts determine the nature of risk and consumer involvement within the consumer buying and consumption processes.

Midgley (1983) noted that risk differs between hedonic, functional and symbolic products.

Personality

The personality area of the prism is referring to the metaphorical concept of brand personality which is succinctly defined by Jennifer Aaker (1997) as;

“the set of human characteristics associated with a brand”.

Kapferer stated that a brand has a personality of its own and it is this personality whereby consumers are able to understand the brand as if it were a person.

Culture

Culture provides a set of values which feed the inspiration to manage brands (Kapferer, 1997) Kapferer’s justification for including ‘culture’, was that it provides a link between the firm and the brand and that the brands freedom is dependent on the corporate culture. Equally a brand can be instilled with a unique cultural identity and many major brands are driven by culture.

Relationship

Kapferer viewed the brand as being a relationship where there is an intangible exchange between partners. He said that brands are the crux of transactions and exchanges between people resulting in the brand becoming the relationship.

Reflection

The reflection area of the model represents the area where the image of the brand target is seen. This implies that there is a matching of the image of the brand and

the image of the consumer. Kapferer said that reflection and target often get mixed up and that by 'reflecting' the consumer should be seen as they wish to be seen rather than as they actually are. It should provide a model with which the consumer can identify and provide them with a flattering image.

Self Image

Kapferer referred to this area of the prism as representing the relationships we have within ourselves which result in attitudes towards the brand. This is generally taken in the branding literature to represent how far a brand fits one's self image and/or helps to build an individual's self image. This applied to the image which is displayed to the outside world, and that which is within the individual's own perception of the self.

Picture of sender and receiver

These areas of the prism indicate that there is more than one perspective from which to study the brand. The physique and personality facets of the brand help define the sender i.e. the brand, reflection and self image facets, define the consumer as the recipient. The facets relationship and culture bridge the gap between the brand and the consumer.

Externalisation and Internalisation

Combined with the pictures of the sender and recipient, the model is organised to represent areas concerned with internal and external operations. The facets to the

left of the prism which are physique, relationship and reflection, according to Kapferer are the social facets which give the brand an outward expression. The three facets are all visible. Those to the right, namely personality, culture and self-image are incorporated within the brand itself and are as Kapferer (1997) describes 'within its spirit'.

Overall Kapferer's prism can be justifiably used as a starting point for the building of a consumer-brand relationships model. Firstly because of its comprehensive approach to understanding brands and secondly to remind us that consumer-brand relationships are developed due to brand identity and as a consequence of the brand's existence.

5.3.1. Consumer-Brand Relationships Model

From the basis of Kapferer's Prism of Brand Identity and a study of the literature a Consumer - Brand Relationship Model can be proposed as shown in figure 5.2. The model consists of three main areas, a representation of the brand, a representation of the consumer and the relationship as perceived by the consumer. These components exist within a context, which is dependent on time, situation, consumer demographics and contextual needs.

Like Kapferer's Prism, interrelationships exist between the components of the Consumer-Brand Relationship Model and these represented by directional arrows (see figure 5.2).

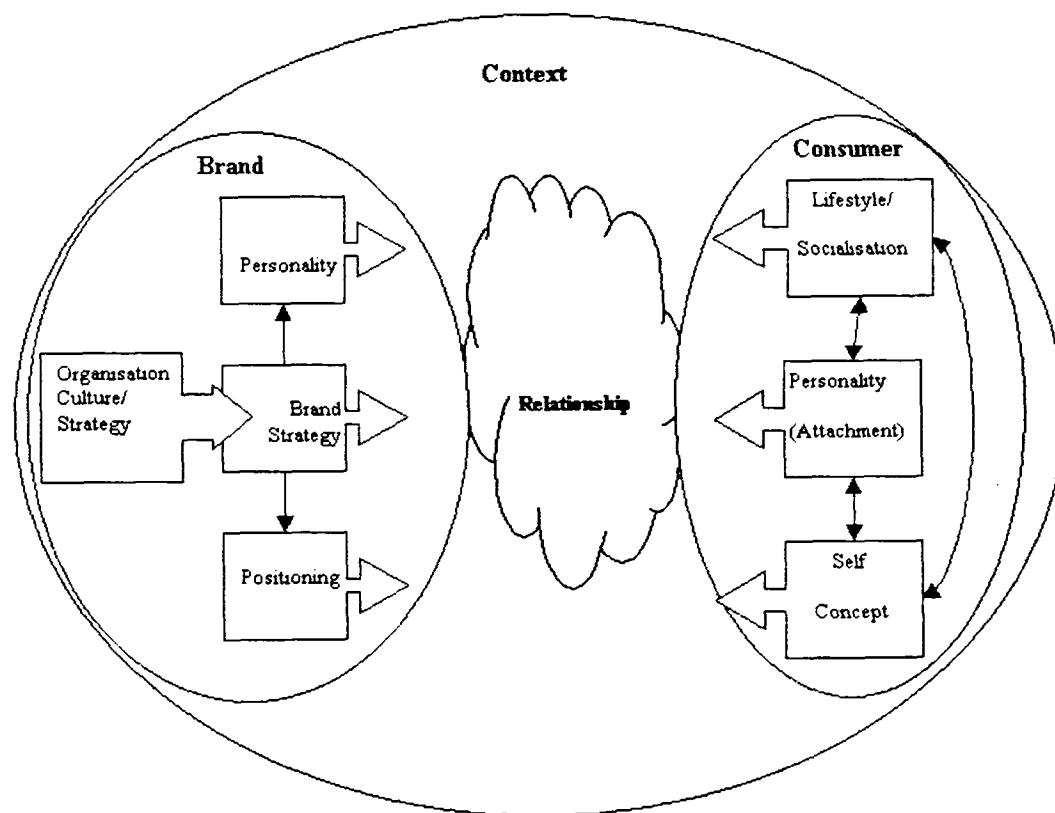
Kapferer did not directly include the consumer within his prism, relying on the facets of reflection and self-image to incorporate a consumer perspective. The study of consumer-brand relationships is dependent on a study of the consumer, as each individual will have a unique collection of different brand relationships. Any relationship between a consumer and a brand exists because of the meaning that the brand contributes to the consumer's life.

Earlier in this chapter it was proposed that an appreciation of the views of both parties is required. At a basic level this means that attention needs to be paid to how the brand is viewed or perceived by the consumer. How those responsible for managing the brand perceive the consumer or target market is equally important. To consider consumer-brand relationships, Blackston (1993) would argue that in order to fully appreciate the relationship, you would also need to know what each party thought the other thought of them. From this dimension it appears valuable to consider a dyadic relationship where the two parties in this case the consumer and a brand are included within the conceptual framework

The brand side and the consumer side of the model both feature components, which are important to the development of consumer-brand relationships. On the brand side as outlined in chapter three, organisational strategy and culture direct the brand strategy which in turn leads to the development of the brand's positioning and personality. Kapferer (1996) had included brand positioning within the 'physique' area of his model. Within the consumer-brand relationship model 'physique' is labelled 'brand positioning' for simplicity and because brands and consumers each have separate 'sides' within the model. The

consumer side, discussed in chapter four identified that a consumer's personality and lifestyle are likely to be the dominant effects in the consumer-brand relationship. This is because for relationships to develop, brands must contribute meaning to consumers' lives. Personality is a vast area and needs to be broken down to be useful within the model. For this reason, attachment styles, which are relationship specific personality traits, have been chosen. As previously discussed attachment styles relate to an individual's goal-based behaviour towards partners and their perceptions and attitudes about relationships. Self-concept is also relevant to the study of consumer-brand relationships as this plays a role in relationship development and is known to influence brand selection.

Figure 5.2 Consumer-Brand Relationship Model



Now that a theoretical framework has been proposed each of the components can be discussed with regard to how they can help build upon existing knowledge. Several components of the model require expanding to supplement the discussions of the previous chapters. 'Context' is particularly important within the model and will be explained in more detail.

5.3.2. Context

Fournier (1994) argued from the basis that relationships both affect and are affected by the contexts in which they are embedded and that consumers rely on relationships to help solve life themes, deliver on life projects and are rooted in current concerns. This is due to consumers' goal-based personalities, and related to these goals, is the notion of self-concept, an area of emerging importance in consumer behaviour (Schouten, 1991).

The context of the relationship from the consumer's side will influence both the perceived risk and consumer involvement given the social and market factors in operation at any time. Whether or not buying and consumption is public or private (Richens, 1994), and the effect of the consumer's reference groups, will be evident within the relationship context. The existence of alternative brands within the consumer's awareness set is also a contextual factor. The brands meaning is a function of other relationships in the consumer's evoked set (Fournier, 1998). Brands are therefore viewed according to others in the awareness and consideration sets.

These factors have not been studied with regard to the effect they may have on a consumer-brand relationship although it is likely that influences will be evident.

Organisational capability and the competitive market environment, both of which should be accounted for within the corporate and brand strategies, will mainly underpin the organisational side within the context of the relationship.

The context for both consumers and organisations will be a function of time. Over time, changes occur within the organisational objectives, capabilities and strategy. Furthermore, consumers go through various life stages and life events. These can change consumption needs and patterns and, just as our needs for different interpersonal relationships change as we mature, needs for consumer-brand relationships change. Developments within the relationship itself will not remain static but will change over time. Time is an important concept with regard to consumer-brand relationships from relationship, consumer and brand perspectives. Over time consumers gain further experience of the brand and product meaning attachment is dependent on the consumer's changing life stage (Schultz and Kleine, 1995). Relationships differ according to their stage of development, duration time and level of commitment (Hendrick, 1984; Johnson, 1989) and brand strategies can change.

The existence of third parties within the context can influence relationships. Bagozzi (1995) pointed out that individual's desires for at least everyday products and services are influenced if not fully determined by what others around them are doing and that they define themselves and act in relation to these

others. Baxter (1985) noted that the success of relationships normally depends on the approval of other parties important to the individuals. For organisations this is also important as the firm's competitors within the market, strategic partners and core suppliers may influence the relationship between a company and its customers.

5.3.3. Parties within the relationship

The two parties within the relationship are the consumer and the brand. It should be remembered however that the brand exists as a result of the strategies of the organisation and its brand managers. Employees of the firm will be operating from a working relationship dimension whereas consumers who use products and services to fulfil needs and goals may treat either the usage of the product/service or the relationship as more personal to their lives. This could result in the two parties being in the same physical relationship but a different psychological relationship (Dixson, 1993) and would require alignment in order to avoid a 'closeness gap' as identified by Barnes (1996). Hutt (1995) argued that differences arise between working relationships and personal relationships where role expectations are more explicitly defined in working relationships and develop in a more guarded manner with more emphasis on task specific competence than in social relationships. This appears congruent with the branding literature and possibly provides a partial explanation where studies have indicated that buyers and sellers perceptions do not perfectly concur (de Chernatony, 1994).

With a conceptual framework established it is important to now consider which areas are worthy of empirical investigation. Summarising relevant areas which have been empirically investigated within the field will clarify where contributions can be made.

5.4. SUMMARY OF STAGE OF THEORY DEVELOPMENT

Several areas of theory have been drawn together to develop theory concerning potential relationships consumers may have with brands. To find a direction for future work, a brief summary is required to explain what is known within this emerging area.

Firstly, the relationship marketing literature showed the concept is mainly misunderstood and has many forms which generally ignore most 'relationship' principles. Also relationships are not always positive and not always the most profitable approach. There are motivating forces for both organisations and consumers to enter relationships. Consumers' motivations to enter relationships with organisations can be linked to the motivation of adding meaning to their lives. Metaphorical relationships have been categorised by Fournier (1994) who identified the different components of the quality of a relationship between a consumer and a brand. No research, so far, has considered how different relationship marketing strategies influence consumer-brand relationships; the

effect alternative strategies have on relationship quality, or the associated qualities of each type of relationship.

Secondly, the metaphorical concept of brand personality relies on a brand becoming animated as a result of brand actions directed by brand managers. This enables consumers to make trait inferences about brands and helps them to develop relationships. Aaker (1995) developed a reliable measure of brand personality, based on the 'Big 5' of human personality traits, and found that consumers prefer brands which match their 'working self concepts'. She identified that three of the brand personality and human personality traits are directly related.

Thirdly, consumer personality is likely to determine the nature of consumer-brand relationships and the consumer's approach to relationships. As they reflect relationship based traits and can be correlated with the 'Big 5' personality traits, individual's attachment styles are worthy of consideration.

These three summary points now require further development, considering the early stage of consumer-brand relationship theory.

5.5. CONTRIBUTIONS TO BE MADE TO EXISTING THEORY

As the first major piece of work into consumer-brand relationships was by Susan Fournier, it is important to consider the future research areas that she suggested. These are to look at;

- relationship typologies in more detail
- how the BRQ could be a moderator of responses to brand transgressions
- the breakdown of relationships
- the effect on the relationship from marketing activities

Fajer and Schouten (1995) followed up with an investigation of the breakdown of relationships using their own typology of loyalty ordered person-brand relationships consisting of just five types of relationship. The concept of trust and how it is an essential ingredient to consumer-brand relationships has also been examined (Gurviez, 1997). Biel (1997) talked about analysing the elements that lead to image and personality of the brand as well as the relationship the brand has with its customers. The other three areas suggested by Fournier have not directly been studied. These suggestions along with the aid of the review of the literature has led to three main research areas which are used to focus theory testing. They are;

1. The quality of each type of relationship
2. The types of consumer likely to enter each relationship
3. The effect of relationship marketing strategies on consumer-brand relationships

These were developed to contribute towards the overall research problem of investigating how the consumer-brand relationship metaphor can be incorporated to improve strategic brand management. Each of these three research areas will

be considered in turn to identify specific areas where contributions to consumer-brand relationship theory will be made.

5.5.1. The quality of each type of relationship

The quality of each type of relationship, as previously stated, has not been tested or identified within the literature. This is an important area to research so organisations can assess whether the relationships with customers are profitable. Any relationship, which does not have high quality levels, can be identified and remedies sought.

5.5.2. The types of consumer likely to enter each relationship

As distinct characteristics and behaviours of individuals are attributed to their attachment styles, the types of relationships individuals will prefer to enter could be measured and used as a means of consumer segmentation. Work of this nature has not been found within the literature. It would provide organisations with a segmentation technique and an understanding of how to best target its consumers according to their preferred relationship approach.

As consumer attachment styles and brand personality traits have been found to correlate (at least partially) to the 'Big 5' of human personality, it could be possible to combine these, to determine segments of consumers who show a preference for certain brands as relationship partners.

The three research areas will be considered whilst looking directly at the consumer-brand relationship within the context of the proposed Consumer-Brand Relationships Model. Testable hypotheses will be formed as aides to further investigation.

5.5.3. Research Boundaries

All research requires bounding so that the area under investigation is clear. This is particularly important within this research where there is little previous work in the area.

5.5.3.1. Focus

The study of consumer-brand relationships is still at early stages and little has been published within the literature, which deals directly with dyadic relationships between consumers and their brand. For this reason there was a strong need for focus within this topic area where many research opportunities exist. The requirement for focus requires balancing with the need for theory which is broad enough to be managerially useful and for this reason the holistic Consumer-brand relationships model was proposed. Not all of the Consumer - Brand Relationship Model can realistically be tested in detail within the time scale of the research and for this reason specific areas will be covered as they relate to the three identified areas for contribution. These involve, the relationship itself, the brand personality, strategy and positioning on the brand side of the model and the consumers personality as characterised by attachment style on the consumer side of the model.

5.5.3.2. Relationship marketing strategy

Various relationship-orientated strategies are available to organisations. Strategy appropriateness within a context will be dependent on several factors including: the relationship type; the consumer and extent the consumers and organisational relationship needs and capabilities are matched.

Strategies available to organisations have been classified into 'levels' by many researchers including both Brodie (1997) and Barnes (1994). Inconsistencies arise between the two author's relationship marketing levels. A framework which incorporates both works and includes elements from the personal relationships literature is needed.

Barnes (1994) argued that relationships should only be developed when the circumstances of the relationship are positive and relationship strategies are acceptable to consumers. This supported by the work of Duck (1991) who has identified several essential elements of a relationship. These elements are caring, support, loyalty, placing priority on other's interests, honesty, trustworthiness, trust in other, giving help and working through disagreements. Relationship based rules need to be incorporated into strategies and assessed according to whether they are kept and respected within these various strategies.

A revised relationship marketing framework which is based on the works of both Brodie and Barnes will be considered under the headings of;

- customer partnering
- customer retention

- pseudo relationship
- database marketing.

These relationship-marketing levels will be explained in detail when incorporated into the theory testing section later in this chapter.

5.5.3.3. Relationship forms

Another boundary is the form the relationship takes. Considering the holistic nature of the proposed Consumer-Brand Relationships Model and because there is a desire to study both the consumer and organisational perspectives, it is unrealistic to expect that all of the relationship types identified by Fournier could be tested in detail. For this reason, seven relationship types have been selected for study, just as Fajer and Schouten (1995) chose to study five. The specific relationships for study have been chosen for the following reasons;

1. To ensure that the three relationship categories of marriage, friendship and dark side relationships are included. The heading marriage within this research shall be renamed Romantic as not all the relationships are actual marriages in Fournier's marriage category.
2. A range of relationship scenarios, features and potential differences with regard to BRQ scores are included.
3. To enable examination of how different types of individuals are likely to be predisposed towards entering particular types of relationship, which can be cross referenced with the personal relationship literature.

Drawing on Fournier's (1994) work, the selected relationships and their associated characteristics are as follows;

Romantic

- **Committed Partnership** – Long- term voluntarily imposed, socially supported union. High in love: Commitment to 'stay together' despite adverse circumstances. Adherence to exclusivity rules.
- **Courtship** – Relationship being tested for committed partnership contract.
- **Fling** – Short-term engagement of high emotional reward. Devoid of commitment and reciprocity demands.

Friendship

- **Casual Friends** – Friendship low in affect and intimacy, infrequent or sporadic engagement and few expectations for reciprocity or reward.
- **Childhood Friendship** – Infrequently engaged, affective relation dating back to childhood. Yields comfort and reminiscence of past self.

Dark Side

- **Dependencies** – Obsessive, selfish attraction cemented by feelings that the other person is irreplaceable. Separation from a partner yields anxiety. High tolerance of partner's transactions.
- **Enslavement** – Non-voluntary relationship governed exclusively by wishes and desires of relationship partner.

To summarise, the two major boundaries of the research are:

- Relationship marketing has been categorised into four levels and all strategies will be considered within this framework.
- Seven of Fournier's metaphorical relationships have been selected and feature within the categories of romantic, friendship and dark side relationships.

Within the boundaries of the research, propositions can be made which will enable the conceptual framework to be tested. These will be based on the quality of different relationships, the types of consumers likely to enter different relationships and the effect of relationship marketing strategies.

5.6. THE QUALITY OF EACH TYPE OF RELATIONSHIP

Differences within relationship types are likely to lead to differences in the BRQ scores. Expectations of different BRQ scores are based on what is known about the characteristics of each relationship type as outlined by Fournier (1994). The table below shows a summary of the expectations of the strength of the various components, which make up BRQ.

Table 5.1 Expected strength of BRQ components

Relationship type	Partner Quality	Love	Intimacy	Self Concept Connection	Nostalgic attachment	Commitment	Passion
<i>Romantic</i>							
Committed partnership	High	High	High	High	High	High	High
Courtship	Medium	Medium	High	Medium	Low	Medium	Medium
Fling	Low	High	High	Medium	Low	None	Low
<i>Friendship</i>							
Casual friends	Medium	Low	Low	Medium	Low	Low	Low
Childhood friends	High	Medium	High	High	High	Medium	Medium
<u>DARK SIDE</u>							
Dependencies	Medium	Medium	High	High	High	Very High	High
Enslavement	None	None	Possible	Possible	Possible	None	None

By summarising the expected strengths of the individual facets of the BRQ, overall expectations of the strength of the BRQ in each different relationship can be made. In order to do this, scores need to be assigned to each of the BRQ facets which can then be numerically added to establish the expected quality level (for example high = 3, medium = 2 and low = 1). This implies that equal weighting for the high, medium and low expectations exist between the different facets so for example 'high love' is equal to 'high' intimacy. Subsequently, it is not possible to be exact in predicting a BRQ score. The method used does however enable expectations to be formed regarding the rank order of relationships according to BRQ scores. For example, it is possible to predict that committed partnerships will achieve higher BRQ scores than casual friendships. This is because the constructs love, intimacy, nostalgic attachment, commitment and passion are strongly represented characteristics of committed partnerships but are not so strongly represented within casual friendships. The variables under

consideration, within the present study are, the relationship type and the strength of the individual BRQ facets. These are considered in order to determine the overall quality of each type of relationship rather than the equality of the BRQ facets with each other.

By combining the summary outlined in table 5.1 it can be hypothesised that;

5.6.1.1. Hypothesis One

- a. *High overall BRQ scores will be found in the following relationship types which are ordered according to their expected strength;*
 - *committed partnership*
 - *dependency*
 - *childhood friend*
- b. *Medium overall BRQ scores will be found in the following relationship types which are ordered according to their expected strength;*
 - *courtship*
 - *flings*
 - *casual friendship*
- c. *Low overall BRQ scores will be found in the following relationship type;*
 - *enslavement*

5.7. THE EFFECT OF CONSUMER PERSONALITY ON THE
LIKELIHOOD TO ENTER DIFFERENT RELATIONSHIP
TYPES

By considering the behaviours, attitudes and preferences of individuals according to their attachment style it is possible to postulate the type of consumer-brand relationship different consumers are likely to enter. This is built on the assumption that people use the same mental models of themselves when buying brands as they do within personal relationships. Rosenberg and Czepiel (1995) advocate analysing the customer portfolio into segments of different consumers, in order to develop differentiated target strategies. By establishing the attachment style of individuals it could then be possible to target brand and relationship strategies according to individuals' preferred relationship styles. As people use different brands within their portfolios to meet different needs (Gordon, 1994), questions arise about how far the relationship is a joint function of attachment style, factors unique to the partner and circumstances (Hazan, 1987; Simpson, 1990). However, an individual's attachment style has less impact on the partner's perception of the relationship than it has on his/ her own perception. Also it is not attributable to relationship length and individuals tend to adopt the same attachment in different relationships (Simpson, 1990).

Consumer acceptance of relationship forms may be dependent on their attachment style.

Committed Partnership

Given the high levels of love, passion, commitment, trust, intimacy and the ability to commit to long term stable relationships, secure individuals are likely to enter committed partnerships. Alternatively, because of their low level of trust in others, anxious individuals are likely to perceive a 'closeness gap'. This is because they seek maximum and often unrealistic levels of commitment and disclosure from their relationship partners. Avoidant individuals prefer to remain distant from brands and organisations.

Courtship

As courtships are the trial phase relationship to a committed partnership it is unlikely that avoidant individuals would subject themselves to courtships because of the lack of long term commitment to the brand. A ludus love style which Lee (1992) identified as being typical behaviour of avoidant individuals normally does not incorporate courtship rituals. Anxious individuals are unlikely to maintain courtship relationships, as it is this phase where the discovery of a lack of commitment and intimacy from the brand would become evident. Dissatisfaction with the brand would become quickly apparent within personal relationships as partners would find anxious individuals too clingy and so withdraw from a relationship.

Fling

Flings are especially characteristic of avoidant individuals who can enjoy very short-term relationships and can remain aloof within a highly emotional and

passionate relationship. Anxious individuals would avoid a fling relationship as it is devoid of the commitment that they desire. Secure individuals, with their high levels of commitment, trust and ability for interdependence, are not likely to experience this relationship form.

Casual Friendship

Although casual friendships are low in intimacy and are infrequent arrangements, secure individuals with their 'easy to get to know' character and positive attitude towards others are likely to maintain casual friendships with brands they like. Alternatively, the characteristics of low intimacy are contrary to anxious individuals whose needs would not be satisfied with such relationships. Conversely avoidant individuals are likely to be drawn to these forms of relationships given that they prefer this lack of intimacy and are more likely to disclose the self in more superficial relationships.

Childhood Friendship

Childhood friendships are likely to be entered by secure individuals where long term relationships and a positive attitude towards friendship, love and commitment is evident. As anxious individuals see relationships as particularly meaningful, any friendships left from childhood are likely to be retained where possible. Avoidant individuals with their distancing goals are not likely to seek to retain any relationship especially long-term relationships like these.

Dependent Relationship

Dependent relationships with their highly obsessive and emotional characteristics are typical of the behaviour patterns of anxious individuals where the individual would seek to cling to a brand as it meets their needs for security. Secure individuals with their high self-esteem, although trusting and not afraid to depend on others are not as likely to become so obsessively dependent on a brand. Avoidant people fear the need to depend on anyone else.

Enslavement

Enslavement is enforced by the relationship partner (the brand) and so is not sought by consumers. Areas where attachment styles could influence current and future relationships could be a result of their conflict styles and other personality characteristics. Once the consumer is free to choose an alternative brand and they are no longer tied into a partnership, the way they behave could be a function of attachment style. According to Jones and Sasser' (1995) typology consumers can potentially become: loyalists; defectors and terrorists; mercenaries or remain as hostages. Membership to these particular groups could be influenced by attachment style.

The table below summarises the likelihood of different types of individuals entering the various consumer-brand relationships used within this research.

Table 5.2 Likelihood of individuals entering relationships

Relationship type	Secure	Anxious	Avoidant
<i>Romantic</i>			
Committed partnership	likely	unlikely	unlikely
Courtship	likely	unlikely	unlikely
Fling	unlikely	unlikely	likely
<i>Friendship</i>			
Casual friends	likely	unlikely	likely
Childhood friends	likely	likely	unlikely
<u>DARK SIDE</u>			
Dependency	unlikely	likely	unlikely
Enslavement	no choice whether enter or not as partner imposed relationship		

It can therefore be hypothesised that;

5.7.1.1. Hypothesis Two

- a. *Secure individuals will be more satisfied within and more likely to enter committed partnerships, courtships, childhood friendships and casual friendships.*
- b. *Anxious individuals will be more satisfied within, and more likely to enter, childhood friendships and dependent relationships.*
- c. *Avoidant individuals will be more satisfied within, and more likely to enter, flings and casual friendships.*

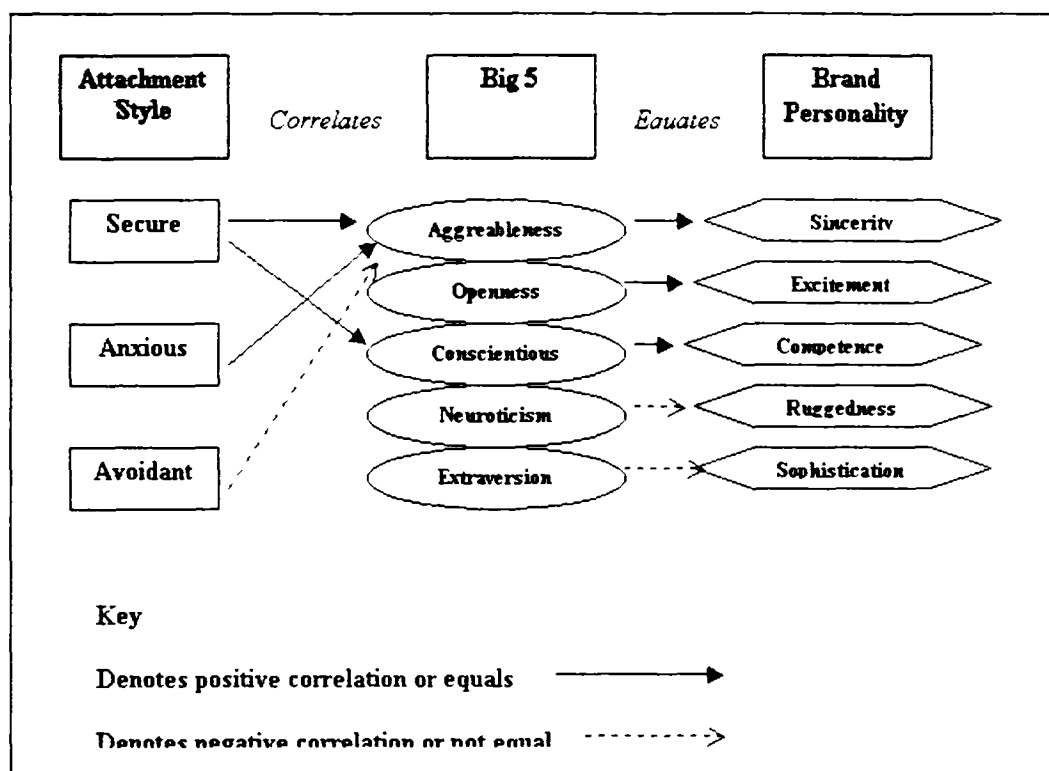
5.8. THE EFFECT OF CONSUMERS' ATTACHMENT STYLES

ON THEIR BRAND PREFERENCE

The consumer's choice of brand partner could be determined by attachment style as both brand personality traits and attachment style has been found to correlate with the 'Big 5' personality traits. Within the attachment style literature, Shaver and Brennan (1992) found that those with a secure attachment style are less neurotic and more extroverted than insecure people and are more agreeable (and possibly more conscientious) than avoidant people. Anxious individuals are slightly (but not significantly) more neurotic, extraverted and agreeable and are significantly more anxious than avoidant people who are in turn more anxious than secure people. In terms of openness, which is the final personality trait of the 'Big five', there are no attachment differences however, openness related differently to anxious and avoidant attachment types as avoidant people are less open to feelings while anxious people are less open to values.

The brand personality equivalencies and attachment style correlations are summarised in figure 5.3 below;

Figure 5.3 Brand Personality and Attachment Style Equivalent Traits



It can be seen from the summary that it is only possible to consider the sincerity and competence brand personality traits, as these are where correlations can be made by both brand personality and attachment style with regard to the 'Big 5'. Although not complete this still enables valuable assertions to be made.

To be able to predict brand partner preference would provide brand managers with a powerful segmentation tool. Although Aaker (1995) stated that preference for the brand is a function of the self and situational factors, attachment styles are inherent personality traits and not dependent on the situation. At this stage of research it is appropriate to only compare attachment style and the brand personality traits rather than adding in the potentially confounding factor of situation.

It can then be hypothesised that;

5.8.1.1. Hypothesis Three

- a. *Secure people will be highly satisfied with brands that rate highly in sincerity and competence traits.*
- b. *Anxious people will also be highly satisfied with brands that score highly on the sincerity trait.*
- c. *Avoidant people will be highly satisfied with brands that only have a low score in the sincerity trait.*

**5.9. EFFECT OF CONSUMERS' ATTACHMENT STYLES ON
THE RESPONSE TO RELATIONSHIP MARKETING
FORMS**

An area of focus within this research is to consider how consumer-brand relationships are generated and the likelihood of different individuals entering relationships. The strategies used by organisations indicated by the relationship marketing framework is likely to evoke a consumer response based on their preferred relationship style. This may be a function of the consumer's attachment style and so it may be possible to target consumers so that the strategies a firm

operates are appropriate to the consumers. The four levels of relationship marketing (customer partnering, customer retention, psuedo relationship and database marketing) can be considered in terms of the likely perception and response of each consumer type.

Level 1 Customer Partnering;

Customer partnering strategies would remove barriers to increase the frequency, strength and scope of interactions between customers and the company in order to increase interdependency and intimacy (Fournier, 1994). The individual would be incorporated into the development of the brand and marketing processes (Brodie, 1997). This approach to relationship marketing should provide the opportunity for Duck's (1991) elements of a relationship to be covered. This form of relationship marketing would be particularly reliant on internal marketing and the empowerment of front line employees. Over time, satisfaction with the partnership situation would be likely to make alternatives look less appealing.

Secure individuals are likely to appreciate the provisions made by companies to enter relationships, given their responsive self-disclosure style. However, as individuals can only maintain a few close relationships, the particular company with whom they enter a partnership would require strong links with the consumer's self-concept and provide significant meaning to their lives.

Anxious individuals are likely to be delighted with the opportunity to enter a partnering situation. The company should take care however, within a partnership relationship with this type of individual, given their ambivalent and obsessive nature. Any minor transgressions from the desired intimacy level, changes made to the brand, or non-compliance with customer requests, are likely to lead the anxious consumer to become disillusioned and spurn future use of the brand.

Avoidant consumers would be likely to dislike any form of customer partnering and, given their aloof and suspicious mental models, be alienated from the brand as it would be perceived to be trying to get too close.

Level 2 Customer Retention;

The focus of this level is to keep customers through a core service strategy involving customisation, augmentation and internal marketing (Barnes, 1994). Fournier suggested customisation and advertising, PR and communication programmes, in order to reveal knowledge about the company, the brand as a person and stressing the consistency, clarity and continuity of brand image. She believed this increases trust and intimacy and so it would be incorporated at this level of relationship marketing.

By increasingly disclosing aspects of the brand and providing a life for the brand, the conception of the brand as a relationship partner is enhanced. Secure and anxious individuals who seek commitment and security will appreciate an

'enhanced' brand personality. Avoidant consumers will remain indifferent to such a strategy, as they seek neither commitment nor others to self-disclose.

Level 3 Pseudo Relationships;

Pseudo relationships are developed according to Barnes (1994) through the existence of structural bonds where there are barriers to an individual's exit from the relationship and social bonds where an actual interpersonal relationship has developed between the buyer and seller which is not easily broken. Both of these bonds increase switching costs and could lead to the perception of enslavement by the consumer.

Avoidant consumers will receive psuedo relationships negatively because although structural bonds exist, social bonds are unlikely. Within a pseudo relationship it is doubtful whether enough attention would be paid to the needs of anxious consumers so they would again be disillusioned with such strategies. Secure individuals would be likely to treat this form of relationship as merely superficial and thus interdependence would not be achieved.

Level 4 Database marketing;

Fournier (1994) argues that databases enable a company to have intimate familiarity with the consumer. It is doubtful whether attachment groups differ in their likelihood to enter consumer-brand relationships when database marketing strategies are used. This is because the widespread abuse of databases through

the selling of customer data has led to this form of relationship marketing being held responsible for the destruction of relationships (Fournier, 1998).

It can then be hypothesised that;

5.9.1.1. Hypothesis Four

- a. *Secure consumers will be best served and most satisfied within a relational strategy where customer-partnering strategies are incorporated.*
- b. *Anxious consumers will be best served and most satisfied within a relational approach but only when companies are in a position to keep promises and to maximise trust and provide the level of closeness required by the consumer.*
- c. *Avoidant consumers will be best served through a transactional approach, as relationship approaches will lead to alienation.*

5.10. EFFECT OF THE STYLE OF RELATIONSHIP
MARKETING STRATEGY ON THE QUALITY OF THE
CONSUMER-BRAND RELATIONSHIP

As previously discussed, different relationships can be hypothesised as achieving different 'quality' levels according to Fournier's BRQ construct. However, within the qualitative phase of her research, Fournier discovered hundreds of brands where just three respondents had relationships. It is unrealistic to expect that all of those relationships would have emerged as a result of a formal relationship marketing strategy. With this point in mind, hypothesis can be made concerning the organisational effort, relationship marketing level and the type and quality of the relationship. Whether or not the relationship exists with the brand or the employee of the organisation is important as noted by Sheaves and Barnes (1996).

It can then be hypothesised that;

5.10.1.1. Hypothesis Five

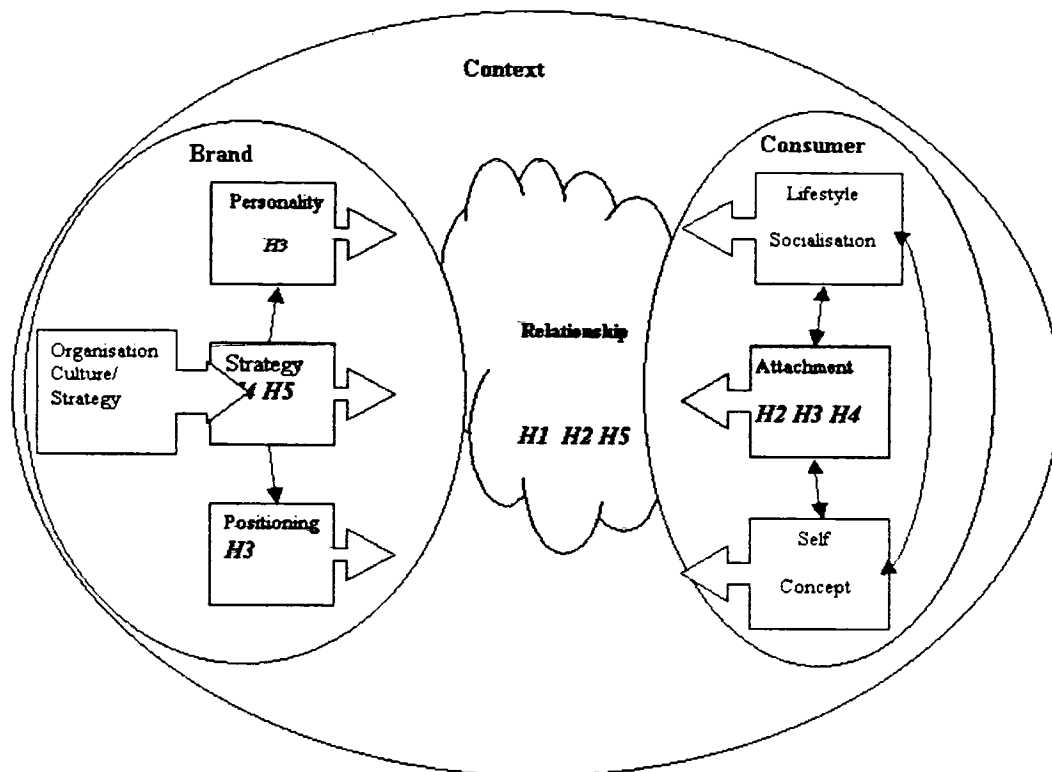
- a. *'Lower level' database relationship marketing strategies involving one way intelligence gathering will lead to a low BRQ and the only relationship likely to develop under such circumstances would be 'enslavement' relationships.*
- b. *Customer partnering with truly dyadic two-way relationship building strategies results in high a BRQ scores and positive relationships.*

- c. *Frequent, tangible people based interactions lead to strong BRQ but the relationship potentially exists between the consumer and the employees rather than with the brand*
- d. *Infrequent non face to face intangible based interaction weakens the BRQ but the relationship is more likely to be with the brand.*

5.11. SUMMARY OF HYPOTHESES AS THEY RELATE TO THE THEORETICAL MODEL

To summarise, each of the hypotheses can be related back to the background theory of this chapter. How they relate to the Consumer - Brand Relationship Model can be seen in figure 5.4.

Figure 5.4 Hypotheses as they relate to the theoretical framework



Hypothesis	Relates to
One	The quality of each type of relationship
Two	The effect of consumer personality on the likelihood to enter different relationship types
Three	The effect of attachment style on brand preference
Four	The effect of consumers' attachment style on the response to the form of relationship marketing
Five	The effect of the style of relationship marketing strategy on the quality of the consumer-brand relationship

Although not all of the components within the Consumer-Brand Relationship theoretical model are used directly within the hypotheses, all components will be considered within the research programme. Attention will be paid to issues such

as organisational culture and context in order to help better understand the components being directly tested.

5.12. CONCLUSIONS

Within this pivotal chapter the major components outlined within the previous chapters were brought together to form a theoretical model. With the model in mind, gaps in knowledge were identified and three core areas not previously studies were outlined. The quality of different forms of relationships, the types of consumers likely to enter different relationship types and the effect of relationship marketing strategies form the basis for moving on consumer-brand relationship theory. These core research areas were discussed further and hypotheses which directly relate to the theoretical model were proposed. The remaining chapters of this thesis will refer to how these hypotheses were tested, what results were obtained and the implications for brand level relationship theory and practice.

CHAPTER SIX

RESEARCH DESIGN

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter develops a research framework by which the hypotheses developed in chapter five can be empirically tested. A research framework requires both a context and an appropriate design for fieldwork and analysis. The chapter considers the research context first and justifies the decision to base the study within a service setting. Services branding research is less developed than FMCG based studies (de Chernatony and Dall'Olmo Riley, 1999). Consumer-brand relationships theory emerged from an FMCG perspective. However, relationship marketing has strong roots within the services marketing literature. As relationship marketing plays a key role in the conceptual framework and the aim of this thesis is to contribute to knowledge, a service setting will help to further theory.

Once reasons for choosing a service setting are explained, design issues will be investigated. The nature of the theoretical model requires a detailed understanding of both the organisation and the consumer. For this reason a case study approach was most suitable. The inherent strengths and weaknesses with this research strategy will be debated within the chapter before the specific industries chosen are discussed.

Case companies were chosen from the airline and 'branded' hair salon chain industries. An overview of the two markets is provided. The selection of particular case companies within the two industries is also discussed. The chapter ends by explaining the research process in terms of phases undertaken.

6.2 SERVICES BRANDING AND RELATIONSHIPS

Services are the main economic sector within most developed economies (Bateson, 1995) and yet branding literature refers mainly to FMCG sectors. Although relationship marketing has its roots in services (Gronroos 1997) work relating to relationships at the brand level so far has concentrated on goods rather than services branding. To investigate consumer-brand relationships, services are appealing as a context because service encounters are dyadic. The emphasis on interaction highlights the service encounter as a psychological phenomenon (Solomon et al., 1985). As it is more difficult to obtain service loyalty than brand loyalty (Solomon 1992), it is even more vital to match consumers' relationship needs with organisations' relationship capabilities. The intangible nature of services makes them difficult to evaluate prior to purchase (Berry 1995), so long term relationships provide customers with the ability to reduce risk and build trust in the brand. de Chernatony and Dall'Omo Riley (1997) argued that a company's branding compensates for intangibility and makes services more real to the consumer.

It can be argued that all industries are service industries, as any sale will require a service element even if this only amounts to product distribution (Christopher, Payne and Ballentyne, 1991). This makes it difficult to define a 'pure' service.

Zeithaml, Parasuraman and Berry (1985) are frequently quoted by authors of services marketing as they distinguished four common factors that characterise all services and differentiate them from goods. The factors are

1. intangibility
2. inseparability of production and consumption
3. heterogeneity
4. perishability

Gummesson (1999) counter-argued that these factors at first glance appear attractive and have face validity yet, can easily be dismissed. Tangible elements do exist within service encounters according to Gummesson, an example he gave is food at a restaurant. It is also possible to standardise elements of a service so it is not completely heterogeneous. Procedures are followed within fast food chains to ensure a consistent service likewise, even highly customised knowledge-intensive services such as lawyers and management consultants have standardised working methods. Gummesson also debated the concept of perishability stating that the idea that they cannot be stored is nonsense. Examples he cites are the ATM being a store of standardised cash withdrawals and hotels as store of rooms. The pivotal factor, which differentiates a good from a service and one that Gummesson could not detract from, is the inseparability of production and consumption. This factor is highly relevant to the study of consumer-brand relationships in a service context. Services generally require some form of interaction between the customer and the supplier meaning the service sector is people centred. This means that there is an opportunity for genuine relationships to develop because of the inseparability of a service from

the persons providing it (Sheaves and Barnes, 1996). Carlell (1999) identified that relationship benefits may be more important to consumers in certain industries such as dentists and hairdressers, both of which are service industries. Carlell's (1999) point is reflective of Barne's (1994) observation that some relationships will be stronger than others and that consumers have a 'my' continuum. The 'my' continuum represents the closeness of relationships. When close relationships exist consumers will refer to services as 'my' doctor or 'my' hairdresser. In some service situations, intimate relationships are avoided rather than sought (Barnes, 1994; Stern, 1997). The service context would therefore provide an interesting setting for the study of consumer-brand relationships. Stern (1997) proposed five attributes of intimate services, which he termed the 5 C's, these are

- 1 Communication (self disclosure)
- 2 Caring (demonstrating altruism rather than a demand for reciprocity)
- 3 Commitment (establishing personal long term bonds to retain customers)
- 4 Comfort (compatibility)
- 5 Conflict resolution (trust)

Stern argued that the 5C's are attributes that should be depicted in all relationships. In the service setting, he argued that advertising is a core tool for organisations to communicate their capability to be intimate. The 5C's appear to represent interpersonal relationship factors which have already contributed significantly to consumer-brand relationships research.

With a gap in consumer-brand relationships research in the service sector and the points of interest identified, the service setting can be justified as a worthy

context for investigation. How this will be incorporated into the overall research design will be considered after an explanation of the case study research strategy.

6.3 CASE STUDY RESEARCH

Within chapter five the theoretical model and hypotheses highlighted the need to consider both consumers and brands within this research. Both consumers and brands require analysis on several levels. For example, on the brand side attention needs to be paid to organisational culture and strategy, brand strategy, positioning and personality. On the consumer side lifestyle and socialisation, attachment style and self-concept need to be accounted for. To investigate consumers and brands at this level of detail, a case study approach is the only feasible option. To measure relationship facets, it is necessary to gain access to the organisations that own the brands which consumers identify as relationship partners. Unless the organisational side of the relationship is held constant it would be difficult to arrange access to the range of organisations that could be identified by consumers. To investigate issues such as organisational culture and strategy, time must be spent within organisations to understand the nature of the organisations in order to make reasonable assertions.

Case study research strategy enables detailed explanations that often survey methods alone miss because of the depth of investigation they encourage. This means that new insights into connections between variables are generated (Eisenhardt, 1989; Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Yin, 1989). It is a particularly useful approach within this research as phenomena are investigated within a real life context (Yin, 1994). As case studies are not a method but rather a

research strategy, a number of methods may be used (Hartley, 1994). Hartley (1994) observed that:

“Many case researchers, in their pursuit of the delicate and intricate interactions and processes occurring within organisations, will use a combination of methods, partly because the complex phenomena may be best approached through several methods, and partly deliberately to triangulate (and thereby improve validity)”.(page 209)

Case studies have frequently been criticised for their lack of scientific rigour however the same complaint could be raised about any survey or experiment if the design is careless (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Bromley (1992), Hartley (1994) and Yin (1994) all argued that case studies do not abandon scientific method. Case studies have also been widely regarded as purely a qualitative form of research. Perhaps this is because of the popularity of narrative teaching cases. If the view of 'case studies as research strategies' is taken, incorporating a variety of methods is possible. Quantitative methods therefore are equally useful in case study research. Some academics have used case studies wholly as quantitative research, others combine approaches and also adopt qualitative methods (Hartley, 1994; Yin, 1994). Another common criticism of case studies concerns the notion of generalisation. Yin (1994) and Hartley (1994) both argued that case studies are generalisable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes. Hartley (1994) stated that:

“The aim of writing with a clear conceptual framework rather than a narrative will also help to relate theory to the literature and aid generalisation. Where the researcher has been able to undertake more than one case study, this clearly increases confidence in the findings, though it is unlikely that the sample size will

ever be large and single case studies can have authority in their own right”(page 226)

A strategy to increase scientific generalisation is to use multiple case studies (Eisenhardt, 1994; Yin, 1994). The number of cases selected should ideally be between 2 and 8 (Eisenhardt, 1994). If two or more cases are shown to support the same theory then replication may be claimed. Other validity and reliability issues can be resolved through careful design of the research. The research must prove adequate in terms of construct validity, internal validity, external validity and reliability. Yin (1994) identified several tactics for dealing with these four tests when doing case studies. Table 6.1 shows Yin’s typology.

Table 6.1 Case Study Tactics for Four Design Tests (Yin, 1994)

Tests	Case study tactic	Phase of research in which tactic occurs
Construct validity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -use multiple sources - establish chain of evidence - have key informants review draft report 	Data collection Data collection Data collection
Internal validity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - do pattern matching - do explanation building - do time-series analysis 	Data analysis Data analysis Data analysis
External validity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - use replication logic in multiple case studies 	Research design
Reliability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use case study protocol - Develop case study database 	Data collection Data collection

In terms of design issues a multiple case study was used. Case studies also differ according to whether they are ‘holistic’ with a single unit of analysis or ‘embedded’ with multiple units of analysis. In this research an embedded design

is required as both the consumer and the brand need analysing. To enable triangulation, multiple sources were used to gather data and will be discussed within the research phases section of this chapter. Within this research, the service sector has been chosen as the context to test the theoretical framework. When assessing the context for investigation, it was shown that consumers want different relationships when they use different types of services. To include just one type of service would limit the extent that the theoretical framework could be generalised. For this reason, two different industries are needed to see whether findings can be replicated in more than one service.

6.4 CHOOSING INDUSTRIES

Two case industries were compared within the embedded multiple case design. To eliminate the confounding factor of culture, companies were UK based. The industries were chosen because of their perceived differences in building relationships and marketing strategies. The airline industry and 'branded' hair salon chains were distinct enough to justify any replication as generalisable across services.

It could be said that there is a continuum of service types (Barnes, 1994, Gummesson, 1999). The hairdressing and airline industries are just two service types within that continuum. The nature and contexts of the service encounters for consumers is very different when using an airline or hairdresser. Differences arise from a number of perspectives including: potential interpersonal relationship development; communication patterns of front line staff; tangibility

in the service offering; frequency of the service usage and the industry norms and practices towards marketing. Although every consumer has different service consumption patterns, it is expected that for a majority of individuals hairdressing will be a service they utilise far more frequently than air transport. Relaying elements such as this back to consumer-brand relationships theory, increased interaction is likely to lead to a stronger relationship due to increased feelings of closeness and intimacy (Barnes , 1994, Carlell, 1999). As there has been no previous work investigating consumer-brand relationships in a case service setting, beginning with the case industries selected for this study is a good starting point because of the points of difference raised.

To further clarify how airlines and hair salons differ in their service contexts it is useful to consider how services have been previously categorised within the literature. Lovelock (1983) devised five questions which may be applied when categorising services. The matrices that result from Lovelock's questions can be used to compare airlines and 'branded' hair salons.

Table 6.2 What is the nature of the service act ?

	People	Things
Tangible Actions	Services directed at people's bodies: <i>Hairdressing</i> <i>Air transport</i>	Services directed at goods and other physical possessions
Intangible Actions		Services directed at intangible assets;

Both hairdressing and air transport involve the customer themselves taking an active role in the service experience. Equally as the service involves something

being done to them, a high degree of involvement can exist. With regard to hairdressing, the very nature of the service and its outcome plays a role in defining self-image and thus self-concept.

Table 6.3 What type of relationship does the service provider have with their customers ?

	Membership Relationship	No formal relationship
Continuous service delivery		
Discrete transactions	<i>Airline- frequent flyer scheme.</i>	<i>Air transport Hairdressing</i>

When considering the type of relationship the service provider has with their customers, Lovelock. (1983) refers to actual relationship rather than metaphorical ones as set out in the theoretical background of this research.

Airlines were among the first to develop loyalty schemes with their frequent flyer programmes and so customers who join the scheme could be involved in a member relationship with their airline. Loyalty schemes, which constitute the main focal tool of relationship marketing strategies, do not appear to have developed within the hairdressing sector with only some major salons offering prepaid packages of treatments designed to tie in the customer. As discussed in chapter two strategies designed to tie in the customer do not lead to the development of long-term relationships.

The number of times a service is used may also offer a point of difference. For most individuals it is expected that they tend to use hairdressers more frequently than airlines.

Lovelock was also interested in the amount that services can be customised and how much judgement is exercised by staff.

Table 6.4 How much room is there for customisation and judgement on the part of the service provider?

Extent personnel judgement	contact exercise	Extent service customised	characteristics are
		High	Low
High		<i>Hairdressing</i>	
Low			<i>Air transport</i>

Distinct differences arise between the hairdressing and air transport industries in terms of the extent that contact personnel can customise the service and exercise judgement. The whole service experience within a hairdressing setting requires maximum client – stylist interaction and the skill of the stylist to assess the best approach to the task. This means that parasocial relationships and even actual personal relationships could develop over time. It also means that there is a tendency for a relationship to be with the stylist rather than the salon brand. Some larger salons appreciate the risk of loyalty to the stylist rather than the salon and try to use different personnel for different procedures. For example one stylist may cut hair but another specialises in colouring.

In the case of airlines, the contact personnel who carry out structured procedures for every aspect of the service encounter only exercise minimum judgement during normal circumstances. Also, a wide range of contact personnel will be dealt with during a single service encounter rather than predominantly with one. There is however a greater extent that service characteristics can be customised and this generally related to the periphery aspects of the encounter. Differentiation occurs within many airlines between first class and economy travel and this will be distinguished with the use of tangible periphery aspects. The hairdressing industry uses few tangible peripheries although endorsements of product brands which are sold within the salons do appear to serve this purpose.

The nature of demand and supply within the market may also differentiate services.

Table 6.5 What is the nature of demand and supply for the service?

	Extent demand fluctuates over time	
	Wide	Narrow
Peak demand usually met		
Peak demand exceeds capacity	<i>Hairdressing</i> <i>Air transport</i>	

The nature of both industries is that demand will fluctuate widely over time. Both markets have certain peak periods, for the airlines this will be holiday seasons and for hairdressers Saturdays and evenings if they are open. Strategies such as lower prices in off peak times helps to even out supply and demand. In general a considerable amount of competition exists for both industries and so customers are often in a position to go elsewhere.

The final question Lovelock suggested refers to service delivery. Delivery is categorised according to the number of sites services operate from and the nature of interaction.

Table 6.6 How is the service delivered?

Nature of interaction	Availability of service outlets	
	Single site	Multiple site
Customer goes to service organisation	<i>Local hairdressing</i> <i>Air transportation</i>	<i>Hairdressing chains</i>
Service organisation comes to customer	<i>Home hairdressing</i>	
Customer and service organisation at arms length (mail/electronic communication)		<i>Air transport booking aspect of service</i>

Airlines are restricted to the airports from which they fly and in general there are few options for passengers to choose from. Equally hairdressers tend to have only a single salon although national chains of hairdressers exist and have salons nation-wide. Some salon owners also own small chains with a couple of shops within a specific area. There is a significant home hairdressing sector accounting for 37% of the market (Hairdresser Employers Association, 1996). This means that the nature of the service industry can be more flexible than air transport as it is possible for the service to come to the customer. In terms of arms length service, airlines are becoming increasingly dedicated to telephone and particularly internet sales so although the core service isn't at arms length, a proportion of the encounter is.

Final comparisons between the two industries show that in the case of airlines, planned corporate and brand strategy will be found whereas within the hairdressing industry it is expected that emergent strategy will be most likely. However, major salon chains are expected to differ and plan strategy. The Hairdresser Employers Association represents members who have more than ten employees, have a minimum annual turnover of £100,000 pa and are committed to training. The organisation provides industry specific information and help with business strategy through their business forum and training.

As the airline and hairdressing industries have been shown to be different in terms of their market characteristics and relationship building approaches, it is possible to generalise across two distinct services. Each industry can now be discussed in view of selecting particular case companies.

6.5 OVERVIEW OF AIRLINE INDUSTRY AND CASE SELECTION

The airline sector was deregulated by 1997 (Mintel, 1999) and during this time the number of airline passengers at UK airports on scheduled flights reached 113.2 million passengers. This was a rise of 44% over a five-year period (Mintel, 1999). Mintel (1999) figures show that there are over 1,100 schedule airlines which offer services for the UK market, although the market is dominated by a handful of carriers. Even though there are a large number of carriers who service the UK market many of these are of foreign origin which would incorporate

cultural variations. Scheduled rather than charter airlines were used within the study because passengers have no choice in charter airlines but rather they are allocated a carrier by their tour operator. The implications of using charter airlines within this research are that it is highly likely that only 'enslavement' style relationship would be evident. Although there are in excess of a thousand scheduled services for the UK, the boundaries for this research mean that at the time of case company recruitment only eleven airlines matched the criteria of being a UK based scheduled carrier. To recruit the case companies, marketing directors or their equivalents were identified from marketing directories such as BRAD. Introductory letters were sent which gave an overview of the research area and a request for company access (see appendix 1). The letter also notified the contact that the researcher would be contacting them in the next couple of days so that any gatekeepers could be told that the director was expecting a call. Four of the companies responded immediately stating that they did not have time to participate, one company however telephoned immediately to say that they would be interested in becoming involved. This airline became a case company and will be known as Wing throughout the remainder of this thesis. Wing is neither a 'low cost' nor premium carrier but is priced at a mid range. The remaining airlines were contacted numerous times but eventually all declined. Ten alumni of the Open University Business School were approached because they worked for UK airlines, although several were helpful in cutting through gatekeepers this did not lead to any more case companies agreeing to participate. With replication being an aim of case research, although replication between industries was key, the study would be improved if within-industry replication could be achieved. Although charter airlines were initially dismissed from the

study three UK based charter airlines offer scheduled services. These airlines were approached in the same manner as the scheduled airlines. One airline agreed to participate but would not be able to take part for a couple of months, this airline shall be referred to as Glide for the duration of this thesis. Unfortunately, problems arose at the fieldwork stage with Glide. Staff complained that passengers did not want to complete the survey and refused requests for the researcher to personally distribute questionnaires when this was suggested. After various approaches, no alternative suggestions for gathering quantitative customer information could be applied. Subsequently, although qualitative results were obtained, the sample size for the quantitative study was incredibly poor and could not justifiably be included as a comparable case study. To make valid comparisons between the cases, units of analysis must be the same for each case and to avoid confounding results fieldwork should be carried out in the same manner for all companies (Hartley, 1994). Despite researcher attempts to negotiate ways to increase the sample size with Glide, because of contact personnel changes and a lack of commitment from directors and front line staff it was impossible to make improvements. As it was not possible to compare hypotheses within-industry for airlines this must be considered a limitation within the research. However, replication between industries was possible and even single-case research which is well designed, enables valid contributions to be made because case studies are generalisable to theory and not populations (Yin, 1994). Eisenhardt (1989) advocated using between 2 and 10 case studies and this requirement is still satisfied within this research. Within the 'branded' hair salon industry it is possible to compare two case companies.

6.6 OVERVIEW OF THE HAIRDRESSING INDUSTRY AND CASE SELECTION

There is little published research focussing on the UK hair and beauty industry and statistics primarily come from industry sources. According to Wella Industry Information, the UK hairdressing industry is booming and was worth £2.4bn in 1999. Five national chains dominate the market but a large proportion of the market are small salons owned by stylists themselves. As salons were required to operate branding activities so the theoretical model could be tested and the largest five salon chains were approached to participate within the research. The process of recruiting salons was the same as used for the airline industry. The letter sent to salon chains can be found in appendix 3. In the hairdressing market, perhaps because it has not been 'over-researched' case recruitment was much easier. Three companies were interested in participating. Two companies were franchise-based operations and one was an owned chain. Only one of the franchise-based chains was selected for inclusion in the study. One company required franchisees to participate individually rather than the head office. This would have meant that valuable brand strategy and organisational culture perspectives would not have been adequately accounted for. The franchise-based salon selected shall be known as Brush throughout the remainder of the thesis and the owned chain as Comb.

6.7 RESEARCH PHASES

The case companies for the two service industries were recruited at the same time which meant that the phases of research for each company could occur simultaneously. This strategy was designed in order to fit within a positivist

research philosophy framework. Given the lack of previous work addressing the three broad research questions identified for this study, combined with the existing knowledge into the key areas of branding, relationship marketing and interpersonal psychology, a hypothetical-deductivist model was applied (Kerlinger, 1964). This was in contrast to an inductive approach which would have meant that none of the rich knowledge of the three key literature areas could have been utilised within the research design.

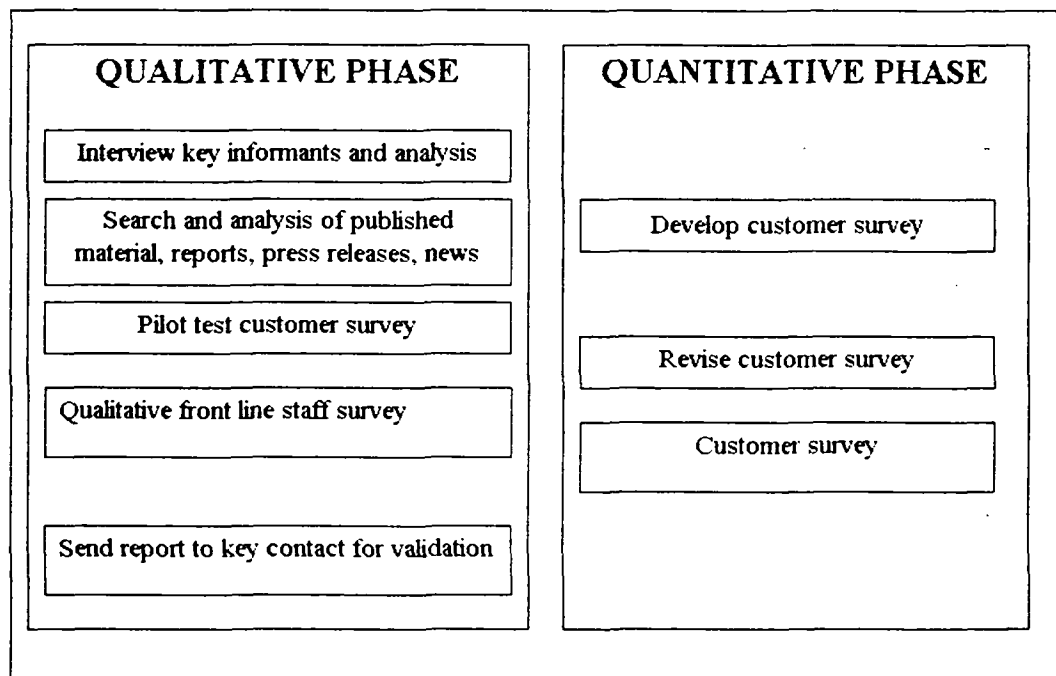
The nature of the conceptual framework lent itself to two distinct phases of research, one to investigate the brand perspective and the other, the consumers' perspective. Hartley (1994) recommended conducting initial interviews with case company contacts to determine who are key informants. This recommendation was adhered to. With the exception of Brush the main case company contacts were all visited and interviewed for approximately an hour. Due to the location of Brush, this interview took place over two telephone conversations each lasting around half an hour. The interview topic covered an overview of the company, recognising which company personnel would be key informants and fieldwork issues such as access to customers were discussed. To comply with the hypothetico-deductivist approach, fieldwork and units of analysis needed to be identical to enable cross case comparisons to be made. This meant that ironing out potential fieldwork restrictions at an early stage of research was vital.

In addition to phases being split between a brand and a customer focus, qualitative and quantitative research methods were defined. Hammersley (1996) and Bryman (1992) recommended using both qualitative and quantitative

methods 'side by side' to gain a fuller comprehension of phenomena. Rossman and Wilson (1984, 1991) suggested linking qualitative and quantitative data for three broad reasons. These are to enable triangulation, to initiate new lines of thinking and to provide richer detail to analysis. Miles and Huberman (1994) also advocated linking qualitative and quantitative data but demonstrated that their sequence is not relevant so long as they are interactive.

The phases of research are outlined in figure 6.1 which is shown below:

Figure 6.1 The phases of research



6.8 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has identified the service sector as appropriate for testing the hypothesis developed in chapter five. The two markets selected were scheduled airlines and 'branded' hair salon chains. Lovelock's (1983) line of questioning to categorise services was used to demonstrate the different structures between the

two industries. Justifications for using a case study approach centred on the need to include a detailed investigation of both consumers and organisations responsible for determining brand behaviour. The research design included both qualitative and quantitative phases, which were interactive. The next three chapters will describe data collection and analysis in detail.

CHAPTER SEVEN

QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter outlined two phases of research, a qualitative phase and a quantitative phase. This chapter concentrates on the qualitative phase of research. The split between the qualitative and quantitative phases of research is mainly determined by whether the brand side or the consumer side of the relationship is being investigated. The chapter will examine why a qualitative approach was used for investigating the brand. Figure 6.7 outlined the stages in the qualitative phase. This diagram included a pilot study of the customer survey. Although the pilot study was qualitative in nature, it refers to the quantitative customer survey and will be included in chapter 8. The remaining qualitative items included in figure 6.1 will be discussed in this chapter. In-depth interviews were carried out with senior directors or senior marketers from each of the case companies. This was then followed by a qualitative based survey of front line staff. The senior personnel interviewed identified customer facing hair stylists, ground and cabin crews as pivotal in building customer relationships. An extensive body of literature backed this view. As well as interviews, to increase triangulation a search for secondary sources was carried out. All qualitative data collected was content analysed and the chapter ends by explaining the analysis process.

7.2 IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

During initial conversations with contacts at the case companies, individuals responsible for brand and relationship building activities were identified. These individuals ranged from managing directors to salon managers in the hairdressing cases but tended to be specifically marketing orientated in the airlines. As with most qualitative research the sample was initially purposive and theoretically driven (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Once interviewing began, the sample evolved as new informants were identified. Miles and Huberman (1994) indicated that this form of conceptually driven sequential sampling is normal within qualitative research. The roles of respondents can be seen in table 7.1 below.

Table 7.1 Roles of senior personnel interviewed

Brush	Comb	Wing
Managing director	Marketing manager	Network director
Marketing director	Senior creative director	Marketing manager
Beauty director	Training manager	Brand manager
Regional manager	Regional manager	Senior product manager
Franchisee	Salon manager	Market research manager

Sample sizes tend to be small and are not governed by issues of statistical generalisation, as they are purposive (Mason, 1996). Each interview lasted between one and two hours. Interviews were recorded and later transcribed by the researcher.

Following initial key contact conversations, a topic guide was designed to ensure that the areas highlighted within the conceptual framework were covered. The topic guide was used to direct the semi-structured interviews but was not rigid to prevent unexpected interesting points from emerging. The guide was flexible

enough to allow for contextual factors to surface and was designed to minimise force compliance and not disrupt the flow of answers. As greater familiarity with the company was gained, interviews became increasingly structured. The topic guide became more refined as advocated by Glaser and Strauss (1967). Respondents interviewed later were presented with issues discovered during earlier interviews as recommended by Miles and Huberman (1994). The topic guide probed in the areas outlined in figure 7.1. Figure 7.1 also shows in brackets how the topics relate to the theoretical model and hypotheses outlined in chapter five.

Figure 7.1 Interview Topic Guide

<u>Interview Topic Guide</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate organisation and culture (context / organisational culture) <p>How is the business organised – departments, key functions, key personnel ? How would you describe the culture ?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The services brand – brand personality, identity and strategy. (Hypothesis 3) <p>What differentiates your brand? Brand history / brand philosophy - evolution over time? How would you describe the personality of your brand? Brand communications / marketing promotions What plans do you have for your brand? How is this executed throughout the organisation?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate relationship philosophies. (Hypotheses 4 & 5) <p>What is meant / understood by the organisation to represent a relationship? What is this organisations attitude towards customer relationships? Are long or short-term relationships sought?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationship building strategies. (Hypotheses 4 & 5) <p>What attempts are made by the organisation to build forms of relationships? What rationale is behind these strategies?</p>

- **Internal marketing (Hypotheses 4 & 5)**

How are relationship building and brand strategies considered throughout the organisation?

Are any staff training aspects used to encourage the development of these strategies?

Are staff encouraged to develop relationships with customers?

What customer care/ satisfaction strategies exist - if so how are these executed?

Customer monitoring?

Deviations from the outlined areas did occur in every interview and so this guide does not reflect all of the themes discussed. As well as being directly interviewed, respondents were asked to complete a brand personality measurement scale. The scale used was Aaker's (1995) brand personality measurement scale which was discussed in chapter three. Although statistics cannot be applied because of the small sample, it enables a general idea of the brand personality to be understood. Comparisons are easier because the same attribute dimensions within the scale are used across the cases. This scale was also used in the consumer survey and so it was possible to make broad comparisons between consumer and organisational perceptions of the brand personality. The scale will be discussed further when all measurement items are assessed in chapter eight. Another group whose perception of brand personality was measured with this scale was front line staff. During the in-depth interviews, customer interface staff was widely acknowledged as being influential in the consumer-brand relationship.

7.3 STAFF SURVEY

Customer interface personnel were identified as all salon team members in the hairdressing cases and ground and cabin crew in the airline case. The nature of

the roles of these staff meant that it was difficult to find specific periods when they could be interviewed for any length of time. The case companies were not keen for employees to spend working time being interviewed. Staff tended to believe that being interviewed about their job roles was essentially a work matter which would ultimately benefit their employers. Therefore staff did not want to be interviewed in their own time. To find a balance, a qualitative based survey was sent to staff. Due to the time taken to participate in the research and resources available, not all salons within the hairdressing case companies were able to contribute. A sample of salons was therefore taken. The sample only included salons that had been open for over two years. This was to ensure that there had been time for salon reputation to be built. If a salon was new to an area, there may not have been time for an established client base to form. This could lead to biased results. Salons were located throughout the UK and ranged from Newcastle to Hertford. Key contacts at the case companies negotiated and arranged access. The researcher then contacted franchisees and salon managers to give them more information about the research and try to build their commitment to the study. The letters sent to salon managers to give them more information about the survey and asking for assistance with survey distribution are included in appendix 4. After discussions, there were four Comb salons and six Brush salons in the sample. Salon managers and franchisees were asked to distribute the staff survey to a cross section of team members. Likewise not all airline crew teams were included in the sample and the key contact organised 20 copies of the survey to be distributed to a purposive cross section of crew. Surveys were packaged with a reply paid envelope to be returned directly to the Open University Business School (OUBS) with an OUBS branded pen to

encourage response. The covering letter informing staff about the research and asking for their help can be found in appendix 5. After two weeks, key contacts and salon managers were asked to prompt staff to return their surveys if they had not already done so. Only two more surveys were received after this prompt. Response rates can be seen in table 7.2 below.

Table 7.2 Staff survey response rates

Company	Number of surveys distributed	Returned	Response rate
Brush	30	20	67%
Comb	30	14	47%
Wing	30	13	43%

The response rate was good compared to an average response rate of 30% or less for self-completion surveys (Dillon, Madden and Firtle, 1994). As the survey was distributed by senior members of case organisations, this may have contributed to a larger than expected response. As the majority of questions were open-ended requiring thought and involvement of the respondents it was expected that this would have had a negative effect on response. As the nature of this phase of research is qualitative, sample size is less important than if statistical generalisations were being made (Mason, 1996).

The roles of respondents can be seen in table 7.3 below. All respondents had worked for the case organisations for over a year and so are assumed to have a good level of knowledge about the brand and organisational processes.

Table 7.3 Job roles of respondents

Brush		Comb		Wing	
Job function	Number in sample	Job Function	Number in sample	Job function	Number in sample
Senior stylist	6	Stylist	6	Cabin crew	8
Receptionist	3	Salon manager	3	Ground crew	3
Beauty specialist	3	Artistic director	2	Supervisors	2
Salon manager	2	Style director	2		
Franchisee	2	Assistant manager	1		
Stylist	2				
Junior stylist	1				
Trainer	1				

A wide range of individuals in different job functions responded to the survey. The survey consisted mainly of open-ended questions and a couple of measurement scales.

8.1.1 Survey questions

The survey questions can be directly related to the conceptual framework and covered topics relating to:

- brand differentiation (brand overview);
- whether they perceived the customer relationship to be with the brand or the staff (hypothesis 5);
- what initiatives were taken at a company level to build relationships (hypotheses 4 and 5)
- what is their personal role in building relationships (hypotheses 4 and 5)

The questionnaire can be found in appendix 6. All responses were content analysed and a colleague verified coding. The co-efficient of agreement will be considered at the end of this chapter when the content analysis for the whole of the qualitative phase is discussed. Other areas that required content analysing were from secondary sources of evidence.

7.4 SECONDARY SOURCES AND OBSERVATION

To gain a greater understanding of the brands and to improve triangulation, secondary sources of evidence were collated. To obtain this information, those interviewed were asked for any published materials used both internally and externally. Examples of materials were corporate videos used for internal training on brand development, press releases, trade magazine articles, adverts, research reports and corporate magazines. As well as the information provided directly by the case companies, press searches were carried out. Databases of daily newspapers were accessed to track all news reports that customers may have read. Due to the overlap of hairdressing and the fashion press, the glossy women's monthly magazines which were identified by the hairdressing case companies to be read by their target market were also scanned for any reference to either of the chains. Yin, (1994) suggested compiling a case study database to increase reliability. A full case study database containing a list of the collated materials, along with all data used within the research can be found in appendix 7.

Informal observations made about sites of case companies help to provide a richness and context to the study (Yin, 1994). Informal observations were

recorded about the imagery, atmosphere and interactions witnessed whilst at the sites of case companies. Three salon branches were visited for both Brush and Comb as well as the head office visits made during interviewing. Wing operated from two main office sites and both were visited along with two airports from which they fly. Check-in and lounge services were observed at these airports. As with the other qualitative data collected, secondary sources of evidence and observations were content analysed.

7.5 CONTENT ANALYSIS PROCEDURE

Analysis of qualitative data requires coding data. Codes are efficient data-labelling and data retrieval devices (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Miles and Huberman (1994) stated that coding should start to be generated prior to fieldwork to tie conceptual interests to the data. The authors also stated that coding should drive on-going data collection. As stated earlier in this chapter, the interview stage of research became increasingly focused over time. In this study, codes were partially selected prior to fieldwork and were related to the broad constructs in the theoretical model. Although these broad descriptive codes remained throughout analysis, more detailed sub-codes within these were developed as the researcher gained more knowledge.

Check-coding is suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994) as a strategy to increase reliability of qualitative analysis. The strategy involves refining codes with the help of a colleague to ensure that both researchers would independently categorise data into the same codes. The authors also suggested re-coding the data at a later time to check internal consistency. In this study the researcher

coded the data as it was collected and then re-coded a month after the end of data collection. Reliability is assessed through a co-efficient of agreement. To obtain this co-efficient, the number of agreements is divided by the total number of agreements and disagreements. Following the researcher twice coding the data the co-efficient of agreement can be seen in table 7.4 below.

Table 7.4 Internal consistency code checking co-efficient of agreement

Qualitative data	Brush Co-efficient of agreement	Comb Co-efficient of agreement	Wing Co-efficient of agreement
In-depth interviews	82%	80%	75%
Staff survey	85%	82%	86%
Materials and observations	93%	89%	90%

Codes were evaluated and refined before a colleague with branding knowledge independently verified coding. The co-efficient of agreement can be seen in table 7.5 below

Table 7.5 Inter-researcher co-efficient of agreement

Qualitative data	Brush Co-efficient of agreement	Comb Co-efficient of agreement	Wing Co-efficient of agreement
In-depth interviews	94%	91%	92%
Staff survey	91%	93%	97%
Materials and observations	97%	98%	94%

Inter-researcher differences were resolved through discussion as suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994). The co-efficient of agreement for each of the three cases increased to the 90% range as the codes became increasingly refined. This reflects how the process of code-recode increases reliability. Miles and Huberman (1994) stated:

“Eventually both intra- and intercoder agreement should be up in the 90% range depending on the size and range of the coding scheme” (page 64)

Once all research was complete, case reports were presented to the participating case companies. Key contacts were asked whether the interpretation of their organisation looked fair. This was suggested by Yin (1994) as a way to increase validity. All contacts agreed that the qualitative based interpretation was indeed fair.

The qualitative analysis can therefore be considered reliable and will contribute substantially to the overall study.

7.6 CONCLUSIONS

Within this chapter, the different stages of the qualitative phase of research were assessed. In-depth interviews with senior personnel proved fruitful in providing details about the relationship context. All organisational dimensions of the theoretical model were covered within the interviews. Specifically hypotheses four and five, which require information about relationship marketing strategy, were covered both within the interviews and staff survey. The staff perspective was important within this study as staff have the ability to ‘make or break’ relationships. In service industries, staff are walking interpretations of the brand.

Published materials and observations were also sought to generate information about the organisational perspective. All qualitative data was then content analysed and final reliability co-efficient for each case reached the 90% range. The qualitative research was just one phase within the overall study. The quantitative phase of research will be discussed in the next two chapters.

CHAPTER EIGHT

QUANTITATIVE DATA COLLECTION

8.1 INTRODUCTION

The quantitative phase of research will be considered within this chapter and will focus primarily on the data collection methods. This quantitative phase related to the customer's perspective. The chapter will first consider why a quantitative survey was most suitable. The nature of the services and the need to incorporate many constructs into the measurement devise are key reasons for this approach. To test the proposed questionnaire, two pilot tests were carried out. These tests will be described in the chapter and attention will then be paid to the construction of the final questionnaire. Aspects of the questionnaire to be discussed include the topics covered, the measurement scales and the length and structure. Once these issues are resolved, attention will be paid to the distribution of the survey and the sampling frame. Finally the response rate and data entry will be considered.

8.2 THE REASON FOR A QUANTITATIVE APPROACH

The hypothesis generated from the conceptual framework in chapter four stipulates that consumers' views are measured across a wide range of constructs.

These include:

- perceived relationship form;
- attachment style;
- perceived brand personality;

- perceived relationship marketing strategy;
- perceived brand relationship quality;
- perceived satisfaction and quality with service;

Several of the constructs such as brand personality and BRQ can only be measured with a quantitative measurement scale. Also, questions relating to attachment style are very personal and it is unlikely that respondents would feel comfortable talking face to face with a stranger about such issues.

The characteristics of the services participating in the research mean that a self-completion survey method is most suitable. Contact details for customers are not easily obtained due to lack of records in the hairdressing industry and data protection rules governing the release of passenger records by airlines. Airports are generally busy, scheduled flights have short check-in times and flight duration was short for the destinations covered by the case airlines. Hair salons are often treated as places to relax by clients and the case companies did not think it appropriate for their clients to be approached within the salon. These factors rule out personal interviews and respondent recruitment at the location of the service. They also rule out the possibility of contacting customers at home or indeed the use of postal surveys. Also, it is not usually possible to generate a large sample through personal interviews in a research study of this nature because of the time factor.

With the large number of variables to be included in one study a pilot survey was necessary.

8.3 PILOT STUDY

Two pilot studies were conducted to test the customer questionnaire. As outlined in chapter six, the methodology used for each of the three case companies must be exactly the same to enable comparison. This meant that negotiations with case companies to ensure they approved the questionnaire, didn't disrupt the measurement of key items. Once these issues were resolved the two pilot studies were carried out.

8.3.1 Pilot Study One

The first pilot study was used to ensure that respondents would be comfortable in thinking about brands in interpersonal terms. Also, to assess whether they would be willing to answer questions about their style of attachment in relationships. A convenience sample of fifteen individuals was used. Respondents were not students, academics or marketers as these groups may have induced a bias response. Six of the respondents had used an airline within the last month and all of the respondents had used a hair salon within the last month. It was assumed that respondents would be familiar with the contexts in which the survey would be used. It also implied that they were in a stronger position to comment on the attitudes of users of these services, to being questioned about the concepts under investigation. The first pilot study was divided into two stages.

8.3.1.1 Stage One

The first stage was used to assess whether respondents were capable of thinking about relationships with brands in interpersonal relationships terms. Although Fournier (1996) had used this method in her research, it was in an FMCG

context. Also, within her quantitative study, only three relationships were used, this study used seven relationships. The relationships Fournier (1996) included were all-time best friend, good friends and casual acquaintances. There were no romantic or dark side relationships included. Fournier provided statements about each of the three relationships. A five point Likert scale was included for respondents to state the extent to which it described the relationship on the scale. This approach meant that respondents could indicate more than one of these relationships with the same brand, which could be misleading. The pilot study did not include a Likert scale. Instead Fournier's definitions of the relationship types were provided as relationship descriptions. Respondents were presented with all seven relationships and descriptions. For each relationship type, respondents were then asked to identify one service brand they believed they had that form of relationship with. The descriptions are shown in figure 8.1 along with the instructions given to respondents.

Figure 8.1 Relationship type identification

<u>Relationship Type Identification</u>
<p><u>Instructions</u></p> <p>This part of the study requires you to use your imagination and imagine that the brands we use can act in the same way as people. It needs you to imagine that somehow that service brands can come to life and become a person with human qualities. Think about the ways you would interact with brands as if they were people.</p> <p>This may seem strange but really it is not so unusual, for example many people think of their cars in this way. All this study asks, is that you take this one step further and consider the relationship you may have with brands.</p> <p>Listed below are descriptions of different types of relationships. Please read the descriptions and for each type of relationship, identify a service brand with whom you think you have that type of relationship.</p>

Descriptions:

Committed Partnership

My relationship with this brand is like that of a committed partnership , we have a long term socially supported union which is high in love. We are committed to stay together despite adverse circumstances. (or we love each other and will stay together despite whatever happens.)

Courtship

My relationship with this brand is like that of a courtship. I am trying this brand to see whether we get along and will become committed partners in the future.

Fling

My relationship with this brand is like a fling. I have no feelings of commitment to this brand although the short contact with which we have had is highly rewarding. I have no plans to stay with this brand although it has served its purpose.

Casual Friend

My relationship with this brand is like that of a casual friend. We interact infrequently as an when the opportunity arises and get on when we do although I couldn't say whether we will continue to be friends in the long term.

Childhood Friend

My relationship with this brand is like that of a childhood friend. We do not see each other very often but when we do I can think of earlier times and experiences with this brand . This brand makes me feel comfortable.

Dependency

My relationship with this brand is like that of a dependency. When separated from this brand and I am not able to use it I become anxious as this brand is irreplaceable.

Enslavement

My relationship with this brand is like that of an enslavement. I have no choice but to be in the relationship, which I feel, is completely controlled by the brand.

After identifying service brands they have different relationships with,

respondents were asked to discuss with the researcher how and why these

metaphorical relationship types reflected their interactions with the brands.

Respondents were also asked to comment on how the terminology used in each

of the descriptions adequately reflected their perceptions of the relationship types.

When explaining why they felt their relationships with service brands fitted into the categories of relationships, respondents spoke freely and with confidence.

The general consensus was that sometimes it is difficult to remember the brands that they use but, once brands were recalled, the categories made sense and were an interesting way to think of services. Respondents were coherent and fluently spoke about their brands in relationship terms. Even without the aid of the descriptions at hand, respondents spoke of their brands in relationship terms and described the relationship using the same terms as in the descriptions.

Three respondents were not able to think of brands for every single relationship type but were more than able to discuss relationships with brands they had identified. These few respondents stated that the reason they could not complete the task was because they simply didn't use brands which would fit into the remaining categories or that they had trouble in recalling brands when put 'on the spot'. Importantly, they did envisage occasions when the relationship forms could exist although they just hadn't experienced them.

Overall respondents were very comfortable in thinking of service brands in interpersonal relationship terms and thought that it was more fun than other surveys they had completed in the past.

8.3.1.2 Stage Two

The second stage of the first pilot study was carried out immediately after the first part with the same respondents. This part concerned the measurement of attachment style.

Attachment style is a particularly sensitive aspect of personality to measure and the researcher was concerned prior to the pilot that respondents would object to such personal questions being asked. There was agreement within the psychology literature that a self-completion method was the best approach because of the sensitivity of the subject. As is shown, debates within the psychology literature were concerned about the ability of respondents to adequately identify their attachment style through self-classification. Hazan and Shaver (1987) had used a self-classification method where respondents were given descriptions of the three attachment styles and were asked which most closely represented their relationship style. Simpson (1990) argued that this was inappropriate because respondents are not equipped to make objective judgements about their attachment style and so a multi-item scale is more reliable. Dillon, Madden and Firtle (1987) argued that multi-item scales are preferable where attitudes are measured. This is because personality is complex and reliability checks need to be built into studies. Simpson's approach therefore appears more realistic and his measurement scale was shown to be valid and reliable.

To establish whether respondents would be willing to answer personal attachment questions, respondents were presented with the scale items generated

by Simpson (1990). They were asked to respond on a seven point Likert scale where 1 represented strongly disagree and 7, strongly agree. The items can be seen in figure 8.2 below.

Figure 8.2 Simpson's (1990) Attachment Style Measurement Scale

<u>Attachment Style Measurement Scale</u>
<u>Secure</u> I find it relatively easy to get close to others I am comfortable depending on others and having them depend on me I don't often worry about being abandoned or about someone getting too close to me
<u>Avoidant</u> I am somewhat uncomfortable being close to others I find it difficult to trust others completely I find it difficult to allow myself to depend on others I am nervous when anyone gets too close love partners want me to be more intimate than I feel comfortable being
<u>Anxious</u> I find others reluctant to get as close as I would like. I often worry that my partner doesn't really love me or won't want to stay with me. I want to merge completely with another person and this desire sometimes scares people away.

Once respondents had completed the scale, they were questioned about any difficulties they encountered in responding to the items. Four respondents questioned the need to ask for intimate details but said that providing it was made clear that responses would not be diverged to third parties, they wouldn't mind answering sensitive questions. Five respondents recognised that the scale was measuring their behaviour within relationships and associated it with the previous questions about the brand as a partner. Female respondents were most comfortable with the questions. Three female respondents said they were familiar

with relationship quizzes in popular women's magazines which were perceived to be similar to the scale.

The decisions made following the first pilot study were:

- to include attachment style measurement but place it near the end of the survey once respondents had an understanding of the nature of the research;
- make it clear that attachment style responses would not be passed on to third parties or stored for alternative uses in the future;
- to include descriptions from which respondents could select the relationship that was most reflective of their interaction with Brush, Comb and Wing.
- To include a 'none of the above' relationship category so that respondents are not forced into classifying a relationship they do not actually have with the brand. This was particularly important because only seven of the fourteen relationships identified by Fournier (1994) are included in this study. Respondents were invited to name an alternative style of relationship to enable these to be accounted for.

8.3.2 Pilot Study Two

The second pilot study was used to test the questionnaire to be used with customers. The development of the questionnaire will be explained further in the chapter but it makes sense to cover both pilot studies together. The second pilot

study involved using a snowball sampling technique to recruit respondents. The second phase of the pilot was more specific than the first and the questionnaires related directly to the case companies. If respondents were not familiar with the actual case companies, then the survey would not make sense to them. Customers of Brush, Comb and Wing were needed to comment on the questionnaire. Respondents who had participated in phase one were excluded from participating in phase two because they had existing knowledge about the research that 'ordinary' customers would not have been privy to. Snowball sampling enabled four Brush, six Comb and four Wing customers to be included in the pilot. Although respondents varied in the amount of time they had been customers, all had used the service on more than one occasion and in the last six months.

Respondents were asked to complete the proposed questionnaire and then discuss it with the researcher. Discussion points raised by the researcher are outlined in figure 8.3 below.

Figure 8.3 Pilot study two discussion points

<u>Pilot Discussion Points</u>
How easy/difficult was the questionnaire to complete?
Which questions were particularly difficult?
Which questions should be changed?
How logical is the order of the questionnaire?
How clear are instructions?
How effective is the layout?
Could it be longer or should it be shorter?

Changes made to the proposed questionnaire following the discussions with respondents were focussed on making the survey layout easier to follow and

instructions clearer. No questions were changed and the order remained the same. The questionnaire can be seen in appendix 8.

8.4 DEVELOPING THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire was developed to measure all customer perspective constructs within a single survey. It was essential that all constructs could be tested within one survey to avoid problems of respondent dropout. The nature of the services meant that it would be difficult to retain a panel of respondents and so there would only be one chance of generating data. During negotiations with case companies at the early stage of the research, it became apparent that they wanted minimal disruption from a survey. The topics covered in the survey were derived from the hypotheses generated in chapter five.

Topics covered

The questionnaire was split into four sections. The first section was titled 'About your use of X' (X was substituted with the name of the brand). Dillon, Madden and Firtle (1994) stated that respondents are often suspicious of surveys and an introductory section should be included to put them at ease. This section was an introductory phase designed to ease the respondent into the survey rather than directly address hypotheses. It included questions about the months or years the service had been used, whether the decision to use the service was the respondents own choice, traditional loyalty style measures and the level of service used. As well as being an introductory stage, the measures also provided insight into the characteristics of the sample.

The second section was titled ‘ About X’. The section included a measure of quality, the extent customers identified relationship building strategies used by the company and any involvement or experience they may have with these practices. The final part of this section was Aaker’s (1995) brand personality measurement scale.

The third section was titled ‘Your relationship with X’. The section began by including a measure of satisfaction and asked respondents to identify the relationship which most closely represented their relationship with X. This was based on Fournier’s (1994) relationship descriptions and enabled respondents to self-classify the form of relationship they felt was most appropriate. The section then asked respondents to state whether the relationship was too close, just right or not close enough to identify any closeness gap as observed by Barnes (1996). Whether or not the relationship was with the brand or the staff was assessed with the use of a 7-point interval scale with the brand represented as 1 and the staff represented as 7. The final part of this section included Fournier’s (1994) BRQ measurement scale.

The final section of the questionnaire was titled ‘About You’ and included Simpson’s (1990) attachment style measurement scale. It also included a question about the respondent’s attitude to relationship marketing strategies in general. This question used the same items as in the ‘About X’ section to assess whether respondents had any experience of strategies used by their service provider. The last part of the section was designed to be a ‘winding

down' section and included questions which would provide demographic and sample characteristic details.

A breakdown of each question included in the survey with a rationale for its inclusion and contribution to hypothesis testing can be found in appendix 9.

8.4.1 Measurement scales

Several measurement scales were used in the customer survey. These included:

- Simpson's (1990) attachment style measurement scale;
- Fournier's (1994) BRQ measurement scale;
- Aaker's (1995) brand personality measurement scale;
- Crosby and Stephens' (1987) satisfaction scale;
- Quality measurement scale based on Crosby and Stephens (1987).

All the scales had been validated and shown to be reliable by the researchers developing them. Paul (1981) stated this is important as:

“valid measures of constructs are necessary for providing theoretical explanations” (page 143)

The Simpson, Fournier and Aaker scales have been discussed at several points throughout this thesis, Crosby and Stephen's satisfaction scale however has not and requires further elaboration.

Customer satisfaction has been defined for the service sector by Storbacka, Strandvik and Gronroos(1995) as ;

“customers’ cognitive and affective evaluation based on the personal experience across all service episodes within the relationship”

This definition highlights the point that there are several service episodes which contribute to overall satisfaction. Despite a plethora of studies, there is no overall agreement about the measurement of satisfaction. Issues such as concepts, constructs, definitions, measurements and factor structures of satisfaction are debated (Brookes, 1995). The majority of work, which considers customer satisfaction, looks only at the single item ‘overall satisfaction’. No distinction is made between the different service elements in these measures. Multi-item scales that have been used, tend to have been developed for specific research projects and are therefore context specific. Within this research it was important to ensure that the same questionnaire was used for all case companies to enable comparison. This means that the scale cannot be context specific yet must be able to separate quality among the different aspects of service. Crosby and Stephens (1987) measured four aspects of customer satisfaction with the use of a 7-point semantic differential scale. The researchers worked within a service setting with the purpose of studying relationship marketing. They argued that overall satisfaction is a function of three other factors. The factors relate to different elements a customer will encounter in a service setting. As their scale is non-industry specific but is detailed enough to be applied within a service setting, it was the most appropriate measure of satisfaction. The scale items can be seen in figure 8.4.

Figure 8.4 Crosby and Stephens (1987) Satisfaction Scale Items

<u>Satisfaction Scale Items</u>
Satisfaction with contact person(s)
Satisfaction with core service
Satisfaction with institution
Overall satisfaction

Berry and Parasuraman (1991) stated that customer satisfaction with services is influenced by service quality. It was important therefore to also measure perceived quality within this research. To be able to identify the perceived quality of service episodes, the scale was constructed using the satisfaction scale substituting the word 'satisfaction' with 'quality'. The scale items can be seen in figure 8.5.

Figure 8.5 Perceived Quality Measurement Scale Items

<u>Perceived Quality Scale Items</u>
Quality of contact person(s)
Quality of core service
Quality of the whole institution
Overall quality

Aaker (1995) recommended using a 7-point scale to measure brand personality. This advice was taken and, to ensure respondents were consistent with the way they answered questions, all scales within the questionnaire had seven points.

8.4.2 Structure, layout and length

The structure of the survey was split into four sections so that the task appeared to have natural breaks if the respondent did not wish to complete the survey in one sitting. It also served to direct respondents' attention to the next line of

questions. Sudman and Bradburn (1983) recommended using separate sections so that the questionnaire looks easier to complete and not overcrowded.

Due to the number of constructs that had to be included within the survey, the questionnaire appeared relatively lengthy at eight pages. It was long however because of the need to capture respondents at one time and thus to include all the constructs. For this reason, the questionnaire could not be reduced in size. Dillon, Madden and Firtle (1994) suggested that crowded and small typefaces increased respondents' perceptions of difficulty and this has a negative impact on response rates. For this reason, a decision was made not to try to reduce the overall number of pages, thus retaining clarity.

8.5 QUESTIONNAIRE DISTRIBUTION METHOD

Initially, several methods for distributing the survey appeared plausible. These included the researcher personally distributing the survey by being in the salons, airports or even planes. Mailing surveys to respondents was ruled out at an early stage due to data protection rules. After negotiations with case companies it was apparent that it would not be possible for the researcher to personally distribute questionnaires. This was because, they did not want any unnecessary inconvenience with a researcher delaying passengers at check-in, or getting in the way of salon clients' relaxation time. As the researcher was not able to distribute questionnaires, the responsibility lay with the case organisations.

In the salon cases, questionnaires were distributed as clients left the salon. In the airline cases the only place where both cases agreed to distribute the survey was

during check-in when other administrative duties are carried out. A positive point from this was that the method prevented the case companies from mislaying boxes of questionnaires. A negative point was that respondents who had never used the service before may not have been in a position to fully answer all questions if they started to complete the questionnaire in the departure lounge. This meant that a larger number of incomplete surveys might have been returned. However, with the short check in times for scheduled flights the issue may have been minimised. Although it would have been beneficial for the surveys to be left on the seats of aircraft, the case companies felt that it would put too much pressure on the cabin crew as routes operated by the airlines had short flight durations. Due to airport practices, it was only possible for the survey's to be distributed from the UK. This may have had a negative effect on response rates with customers forgetting to return questionnaires once they returned to the UK or losing them when away.

The survey was packaged in a clear re-seal plastic envelope so that potential respondents could immediately see the contents. This served two purposes, firstly it was hoped that some individuals who would not respond would refuse to take the survey, thus reducing wastage. Secondly, it would reduce the amount of explaining by the staff distributing the survey and so would be appreciated by the case companies. A pen and reply-paid envelope addressed to the researcher at the business school were included to increase response rate. It was hoped that by including a pen, some respondents would complete the survey immediately as they didn't need to hunt around for the pen or remember to complete the questionnaire later when they could find one. The packages were filled so that a

covering letter could be seen from one side and the pen and envelope from the other.

The covering letter can be seen in appendix 10. Headed OUBS paper was used to help increase response rates. When the sponsor of research is a university response rates can be increased by as much as 5% (Gendall et. al., 1994). The reason for this is that respondents may be influenced by whom they see as benefiting from a survey. The tone of the letter was based on Gendall et. al's findings about the complexity, appeal and tone in a survey covering letter. The authors reviewed the literature and tested methods that were believed to increase survey response rates. The researchers found that friendly tone had no effect on response A very informal tone reinforces a request for help but reduces the credibility of the proposition that respondents' opinions are important. A request for help was shown to have a positive effect on response rates. There was no effect on response rates from the level of complexity of the cover letter. The authors believed that response rates would fall when profit-making corporations were involved in the research.

The letter used for this survey appealed for help with a PhD study and stated that the opinions of respondents were valuable. Confidentiality was also assured. Although the case companies were mentioned so that respondents knew the research would not conflict with their service brand, the overall impression was designed to highlight that it was university-based research.

8.6 RESPONSE RATE

Incomplete questionnaires are often used within research where base sample sizes vary according to the number of respondents answering a particular question. In this research, valid and reliable results would be jeopardised by doing this. The central constructs such as brand personality and brand relationship quality tended to be items missed out on the partially completed questionnaires. It is these constructs that form the centre of the hypotheses. To fully understand the relationships between the brand and the consumer, all sections of the questionnaire needed to be completed.

The nature of survey distribution meant that it was not possible to use reminder letters which can increase response rates to as much as 60-70% (Gendall et al, 1994).

The response rates for each of the case companies can be seen in table 8.1 below.

Table 8.1 Response rates

	Brush	Comb	Wing
Total number returned	203	175	162
Total response rate	47%	35%	32%
Total number completed	115	88	104
Useable response rate	23%	18%	21%

Even though the total usable response rate appears to be low, the total returned response rate was over the average rate of a maximum of 30% for self-completion surveys (Dillon, Madden and Firtle, 1994). The response rates had

been expected to be low because of the length of the survey. The airline case had been expected to be particularly low because of the issues surrounding the check-in distribution.

Four weeks were set aside for respondents to return questionnaires. Salon clients returned over 60% of responses within a week of distribution. The remaining 40%, returned gradually tailed off towards the end of the three week period. The passengers of Wing returned over 60% of questionnaires within two weeks of distribution with the remaining being returned gradually up to the fourth week. 4 responses were received after the four week cut off point.

8.7 SAMPLING

The sample size was generated according to negotiations with case companies about the number they would be willing to distribute. 500 questionnaires were designed to last a week being distributed to every client within the salons. The same number lasted three days being distributed to all passengers on UK and European flights by three randomly selected ground crew working over a one week period.

8.7.1 Sample size

In the Brush case 500 customer surveys were distributed to all clients who visited the six participating Brush salon over a period of one week. In the Comb case 500 questionnaires were distributed to all clients leaving the 4 participating Comb salons over a period of one week. The Wing case involved 500 questionnaires being distributed at check-in to passengers departing from one UK airport on domestic or European flights over a period of three days.

8.7.2 Respondent characteristics

The airline Wing was a single class carrier and so it was not necessary to distinguish between business class, first class and economy class passengers. This meant that all passengers could be included in the sample. In the salon cases, both men and women were included in the sample although the nature of the service meant that the majority of clients were female.

The characteristics of the respondents in the Brush case were that the majority were professional (50%) females (72%) falling in the 25-55 year age bracket (81%). They were representative of the target market described by Brush personnel. 70% of respondents had used the Brush salons for over a year and 89% visited the salons more than 6 times a year and so it is assumed that they have experience of the brand. Respondents tended not to use beauty services with only 13% having beauty treatments and the majority (60%) opting for hair cuts. 26% of respondents visited Brush to have specialised hair treatments such as colouring or perming.

The characteristics of Comb respondents showed that the majority were professional (58%) females (76%) falling in the 25-55 year age bracket (76%). The highest percentage group among this age range was the 25-35 group (31%) which was the target market identified by Comb. The 36-45 category however was also highly represented within the sample (27%). 56% of respondents had used the Comb salons for over a year and 82% visited the salons more than 6 times a year and so brand experience can be assumed for a large percentage of the sample.

The characteristics of the Wing respondents identified the majority as being British (81.7%) males (64.4%) in the 25-55 year age range (75%). 58% of respondents had used the Wing airline for over a year and 59% had used Sky the airline that Wing took over. 51% of those respondents having used Sky for more than a year. The average number of times respondents flew with Wing per year is 24 trips and so it can be assumed that a large percentage of the sample had substantial brand experience. The scheduled airline industry has two customer segments, business and leisure travellers which are not mutually exclusive. During the qualitative interviews it became apparent that both segments were important to Wing. Within the sample on the occasion they completed the survey 40.4% were flying for business purposes, 51% for leisure, 6.7% for combined business and leisure and 1.5% indicated other reasons. The distribution shows that both important segments were well represented within the sample. With business travel one concern was there might not be enough respondents who had freely decided themselves to use the particular case airline. The relationship may have been forced thus creating a skew towards dark side relationships being identified. Within this sample however, 64% of those stating business to be the sole purpose of their journey stated that they personally chose to use Wings.

Personnel responsible for distributing the survey were asked to comment on any differences in the general trade patterns during the period of survey distribution. No differences were reported.

8.8 DATA ENTRY

Once the cut off point for receiving returned questionnaires came, data was entered into SPSS by the researcher. Part completed questionnaires were screened and not entered into the database. Three separate databases were developed, one for each case. With case study research, analysis is carried out individually for each case (Yin, 1994) and so at no time were the three case companies entered into the same database.

8.9 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has outlined the data collection processes used for the quantitative phase of research. The quantitative phase involved a customer survey which was developed to test the research hypotheses.

A pilot study, which was split into two phases, was first carried out. The first phase considered whether it was possible to measure the form of relationships and attachment style quantitatively. The second phase pre-tested the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was developed to include questions that would measure and contribute directly to the hypotheses. The case companies distributed the survey as customers left salons and checked in for flights.

The total response rate for each case was above the expected 30% however because of the need to use only fully completed questionnaires within research meant that this rate was lowered.

All fully completed questionnaires were entered into SPSS ready for analysis.

The data analysis procedures will be explained in the next chapter.

CHAPTER NINE

QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURE

9.1 INTRODUCTION

The last chapter outlined the method of data collection for the quantitative customer survey. This chapter will discuss the data analysis procedures used to test each hypothesis.

The chapter is structured to take each hypothesis in turn and justify and explain the statistical techniques applied to test it. Three techniques formed the basis of analysis, these were analysis of variance, chi square and t-tests. Each of these techniques will be explained as they are encountered throughout the chapter.

9.2 H1 – RELATIONSHIP QUALITY

The first hypothesis to be tested was concerned with the quality of each of the relationship forms. To re-cap, hypothesis one is shown in figure 9.1.

Figure 9.1 Hypothesis one

<u>Hypothesis One</u>	
a.	<i>High overall BRQ scores will be found in the following relationship types which are ordered according to their expected strength;</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>committed partnership</i>• <i>dependency</i>• <i>childhood friend</i>
b.	<i>Medium overall BRQ scores will be found in the following relationship types which are ordered according to their expected strength;</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>courtship</i>• <i>flings</i>• <i>casual friendship</i>
c.	<i>Low overall BRQ scores will be found in the following relationship type;</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>enslavement</i>

Hypothesis one was tested with two measurement instruments. These were the relationship type and BRQ. Table 9.1 shows the relevant variables in relation to the question in the survey which generated the data and the level of measurement.

Table 9.1 Hypothesis One - variables

Question number	Variable	Measurement level
9	Relationship type	Nominal
12	BRQ	Interval

A number of steps were taken to analyse hypothesis one.

9.2.1 Step One

The first step was to run frequencies to determine the number of each type of relationship identified. Respondents who had indicated than none of the described relationships were relevant, were asked to describe the form of

relationship that they perceive with service provider. The verbatim comments provided by those who indicated they had another form of relationship were checked for any potential overlap with the seven relationships used in the study and the other seven relationships Fournier (1994) proposed but were not selected for this study.

9.2.2 Step Two

The second stage of analysis took means for each of the BRQ facets. These facets were then used to form a composite mean to obtain a total BRQ score.

9.2.3 Step Three

The third task was to use descriptive statistics to identify the rank order of relationship types according to the BRQ they achieved. To test to see whether there were any significant differences between the BRQ scores for the different relationship types One-way analysis of variance was used to test the null hypothesis 'There is no difference in the BRQ between relationship types'. Analysis of variance was used because it enables the comparison of two or more means to see if there is a reliable difference between them (Tabachnick and Fidell, 1996). It was possible to use analysis of variance in this instance because BRQ has interval level of measurement qualities (Dillon, Madden and Firtle, 1994). Post hoc analysis was carried out via SPSS ANOVA as this enables a closer investigation about which groups are significantly different from one another. The least significant difference test showed where significant differences arose at the 0.5 confidence level.

To summarise, the main analysis techniques used established composite means, ranked relationships according to their BRQ and then performed one way analysis of variance to establish whether there were any significant differences.

9.3 H2 – INFLUENCE OF ATTACHMENT STYLE ON RELATIONSHIP SOUGHT

The second hypothesis tested whether attachment style determined the forms of relationships customers sought and were most satisfied within. Hypothesis two is re-iterated in figure 9.2

Figure 9.2 Hypothesis Two

<u>Hypothesis Two</u>	
a.	<i>Secure individuals will be more satisfied within and more likely to enter committed partnerships, courtships, childhood friendships and casual friendships.</i>
b.	<i>Anxious individuals will be more satisfied within and more likely to enter childhood friendships and dependent relationships.</i>
c.	<i>Avoidant individuals will be more satisfied within and more likely to enter flings and casual friendships.</i>

The variables used to test the hypothesis are outlined in table 9.2.

Table 9.2 Hypothesis Two - Variables

Question number	Variable	Measurement level
8	Satisfaction	Interval
5	Quality	Interval
9	Relationship	Nominal
13	Attachment style	Nominal

Two specific points need to be made regarding hypothesis two. Firstly, the extent that respondents enter the relationships they were predicted to enter needs analysing. The second point considered whether or not the respondents who entered the relationships they were expected to, were more satisfied than the respondents who entered alternative relationships. Again, several stages were required to analyse the second hypothesis.

9.3.1 Step one

The first stage investigated the assumption that satisfaction is determined by quality as stated by Berry and Parasuraman (1992). Reliability tests were carried out for both satisfaction and quality to obtain alphas for each scale. Although the satisfaction scale had been shown to be valid and reliable by Crosby and Stephens (1987), because the quality scale was constructed and based on the satisfaction scale, a reliability check was required. SPSS has a function called scale validity and this was used to generate the alphas. The scales were all shown to be reliable and the alphas for each case can be seen in table 9.3.

Table 9.3 Reliability alphas for satisfaction and quality scales

	Brush alpha	Comb alpha	Wing alpha
Satisfaction scale	.8830	.8810	.9297
Quality scale	.8568	.7000	.8952

As the scales could be considered reliable, Pearson's Correlation Co-efficient (2-tailed) was next used to assess the validity of the assumed association between composite satisfaction and composite quality. If satisfaction could be at least partially correlated with service quality, this may have implications for relationship satisfaction. Respondents may not be satisfied with the service because of the relationship they have but rather because of the quality of the service. Alternatively both quality and the relationship may jointly contribute to satisfaction. Pearson's Correlation Co-efficient however, cannot test for causality and so although quality and satisfaction may correlate, it does not mean that quality necessarily leads to satisfaction. Testing this is outside the boundaries of this research but may be a valuable line of inquiry for the future.

9.3.2 Step Two

The next procedure analysed attachment style. As attachment styles are distinct rather than a point along a continuum (Hazan, 1997), one predominant style will determine individuals' relationship behaviour. Composite means were derived for each of the styles so that the predominant attachment group could be identified for each respondent. Even though individuals are supposed to belong to only one attachment group some respondents showed no predominant style. It was assumed that these respondents answered the questionnaire dismissively or perhaps not wanting to disclose sensitive details.

9.3.3 Step Three

Once attachment groups were determined, chi square tests were used to assess whether respondents entered the relationships they were predicted to base on their attachment style. Chi square enables categorical data to be tested by comparing the observed frequencies with the expected frequencies. Variables tested with chi square for each of the attachment groups were predicted relationships entered versus the not predicted relationships.

9.3.4 Step Four

One-way analysis of variance was used next. This determined whether there was any significant difference in satisfaction between respondents who had relationships they were predicted and those who had other relationships they were not expected to enter. If significant differences did arise, Independent T-tests were also used to study in more detail the variances in satisfaction.

To summarise, the first stage of analysing hypothesis two was used to check the validity and reliability of satisfaction and quality. Next, correlation co-efficients were used to see if there was a link between satisfaction and quality. The second step in analysis involved assigning attachment groups to respondents. Chi square tests were applied in step three to assess test whether respondents within each of the attachment groups entered the relationships they were predicted to. The final stage applied analysis of variance to determine whether there were significant differences in satisfaction between those who entered the relationships they were predicted to and those who didn't.

9.4 H3 – EFFECT OF ATTACHMENT STYLE ON BRAND PREFERENCE

Hypothesis three considers the effect of attachment style on the preference of the brand. The hypothesis is restated in figure 9.3 below.

Figure 9.3 Hypothesis Three

<u>Hypothesis Three</u>	
a.	<i>Secure people will be highly satisfied with brands that rate highly in sincerity and competence traits.</i>
b.	<i>Anxious people will also be highly satisfied with brands that score highly on the sincerity trait .</i>
c.	<i>Avoidant people we can expect to be highly satisfied with brands that only have a low score in the sincerity trait.</i>

The variables used to test hypothesis three are shown in table 9.3.

Table 9.3 Hypothesis Three- Variables

Question number	Variable	Measurement level
7	Brand personality	Interval
8	Satisfaction	Interval
13	Attachment style	Nominal

9.4.1 Step One

The first step was to seek mean scores for each of the brand personality facets (sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication and ruggedness). Mean scores were required to identify the facets which were most highly rated for each of the case companies. Facet means were attained by computing the composite mean of

all the items which make up each of the personality facets. T-tests were used to identify whether there were any significant differences between the mean scores of each facet.

9.4.2 Step Two

One-way analysis of variance was used in step two to determine whether there was any difference in the perceptions of respondents about brand personality which could be ascribed to their attachment style. The null hypothesis, there is no difference between the mean scores given for the brand personality facets by different attachment groups, was set up for testing. Post hoc analysis using the least significant difference test was used to show where any difference might arise. It was important to test whether there was any difference in different perceptions between attachment groups because individuals are not necessarily homogenous in their assessment of brand personality and attachment could potentially be a factor which contributes to this perception.

9.4.3 Step Three

The third and final stage in analysing hypothesis three involved considering any difference in the level of satisfaction between the different attachment groups. T-tests were used to indicate whether differences in satisfaction were significant or not.

To summarise, hypothesis three was analysed by firstly establishing which of the brand personality facets were perceived as predominant. ANOVA tests were then

used to identify whether or not there are any differences in the perceptions of brand personality between attachment groups. Differences in satisfaction levels between attachment groups were finally measured.

9.5 H4 – EFFECT OF ATTACHMENT STYLE

The fourth hypothesis is restated in figure 9.4 below.

Figure 9.4 Hypothesis Four

<u>Hypothesis Four</u>	
a.	<i>Secure consumers will be best served and most satisfied within a relational strategy where customer-partnering strategies are incorporated.</i>
b.	<i>Anxious consumers will be best served and most satisfied within a relational approach but only when companies are in a position to keep promises and to maximise trust and provide the level of closeness required by the consumer.</i>
c.	<i>Avoidant subjects will be best served through a transactional approach as relationship approaches will lead to alienation.</i>

Hypothesis four utilised measurements used within both the qualitative and quantitative phases of research. The measurement items are shown in table 9.4.

Table 9.4 Hypothesis Four- Variables

Question number	Variable	Measurement level
6	Perception of whether or not relationship practices are used or experienced	Interval
10	Closeness	Nominal
13	Attachment style	Nominal
14	Views on relationship building practices	Interval

The fourth hypothesis, like the previous three was analysed in stages. The first stage focussed on the perceived closeness of the relationship

9.5.1 Stage One

Measuring and analysing the perceived closeness of the relationship was important as Barnes (1994) claimed that closeness is the main variable for determining satisfaction within relationships. It was expected that respondents with different attachment styles would prefer closer or more distant relationships. Perceptions about whether the relationship was too close, not close enough or just right were established through descriptive statistics and splitting the sample into attachment groups. Next the perception of different relationship building strategies was considered.

9.5.2 Stage Two

Descriptive statistics were again used to determine whether respondents perceived relationship building strategies to be used by the case companies and whether or not they had experienced these marketing tools.

9.5.3 Stage Three

The third stage of analysis again split the sample into attachment groups and sought whether there was any significant difference between the mean scores representing their approval of different relationship building strategies.

One way ANOVA was then applied to test the null hypothesis : there is no difference between the perception of individuals towards relationship building strategies based upon their attachment style.

To summarise, hypothesis four which tested the perception of individuals towards relationship building approaches was analysed by using descriptive statistics to determine whether the level of closeness of the relationship was likely to cause dissatisfaction within the relationship. Attachment group specific perceptions about different relationship building approaches were then analysed through the use of descriptive statistics and then one way analysis of variance.

The fifth and final hypothesis was analysed once analysis of all the previous hypotheses for each case company was completed.

9.6 H5 – INFLUENCE OF RELATIONSHIP STRATEGY ON RELATIONSHIP QUALITY

The fifth hypothesis was established to test whether different forms of relationship marketing lead to different types and qualities of relationship. Figure 9.5 outlines the hypothesis.

Figure 9.5 Hypothesis Five

<u>Hypothesis Five</u>	
a.	<i>'Lower level' database relationship marketing strategies involving one way intelligence gathering will lead to a low BRQ and the only relationship likely to develop under such circumstances would be 'enslavement' relationships.</i>
b.	<i>Customer partnering with truly dyadic two-way relationship building strategies leads to high a BRQ and positive relationships.</i>
c.	<i>Frequent, tangible people based interactions lead to strong BRQ but the relationship potentially exists between the consumer and the employees rather than with the brand</i>
d.	<i>Infrequent non face to face to face to face to face intangible based interaction weakens the BRQ but the relationship is more likely to be with the brand.</i>

A major difference between the fifth hypothesis and the previous four hypotheses is that unlike the previous hypotheses, conclusions cannot be drawn on an individual case organisation basis. As each company has a unique culture and relationship strategy, only the strategies used by the individual case company under investigation at that time can be tested. Conclusions can only be made about the part of the hypothesis, which describes the appropriate strategy for that company. To make final conclusions about hypothesis five, cross case comparisons are required. Within case research, it is not appropriate to merge case companies for the purpose of statistical analyses (Yin, 1994) and so observations about the findings for each case will be summarised. The variables under investigation for hypothesis five, namely, BRQ, relationship type and relationship strategy would have already been analysed with previous hypotheses. Relationship strategy differs from the other two as it is a qualitative

based variable. The form of relationship strategy was classified within the qualitative data analysis when in-depth interviews with senior personnel and staff surveys were content analysed.

9.7 CONCLUSIONS

Analysis of the research hypotheses was primarily quantitative in nature. The majority of analysis used univariate and descriptive statistics. The variables level of measurement determined the statistical methods applied in each of the hypotheses. Although there was overlap between several of the hypotheses, each was analysed independently and generally over a number of stages. The fifth hypothesis differed from the others because it required comparing all three case companies rather than considering them in isolation. Qualitative findings were also incorporated in this final hypothesis.

The next section of this thesis will outline research findings. Over the next three chapters each case company will be encountered in turn and analysed using the methods described in this and the last chapter.

CHAPTER TEN

BRUSH CASE FINDINGS

10.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous few chapters outlined the research methodology. Within the case study framework, four companies were investigated and this chapter summarises the findings from the first of those companies. As outlined in chapter six, good case research relies on the independent study and analysis of cases. Within this chapter, and the next two chapters, findings from the three studies will be individually reported. All three chapters are structured in the same way.

The chapter is broadly structured into two parts. The first section assesses findings from the qualitative stage of research, the second analyses the quantitative customer based study.

Qualitative research involved in-depth interviews with key company informants. This stage of research provides the contextual richness to the case study. When writing case research, Yin (1994) advised that care should be taken not to lose the case detail richness. The interviews served the purpose of understanding the brand's role and behaviour within the consumer-brand relationship.

Following a brief overview of Brush, to add meaning to the qualitative insights, findings will be viewed in light of the structure of the consumer-brand relationship model. Miles and Huberman (1994) observed that when reporting qualitative findings:

“there are no standard set-ups, except at a very general level. Each researcher must craft a report structure that fits the intellectual and local context of the particular study” page 302

Following the interviews with key company informants, customer facing staff were surveyed. Front line staff opinions are discussed next. Consistencies and differences between the views of key informants and front line staff are compared and discussed where appropriate.

Once analysis of the qualitative phase is complete, the quantitative customer survey is discussed. This section of the chapter takes each hypothesis in turn and works through the analysis to determine whether the proposition can be supported or not. Within the Brush case, not all hypotheses were supported. Notably, hypotheses two and three which relate to attachment style were not supported within the case.

10.2 QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW FINDINGS

The research design and sampling frame for the qualitative interviews with key Brush informants were discussed in chapter seven. A topic guide used to aid interviews was also discussed and so these issues will not be repeated within this chapter.

Each of the brand sided elements of the Consumer-brand relationship model are discussed in turn following the overview of Brush.

10.2.1 Brush Overview

Brush is a franchise based branded hair salon chain with salons throughout the UK. The chain is highly regarded within the hairdressing and beauty industry and has won a wide range of industry awards. Beauty services have become a key growth area specifically launched so the salon can offer a wider proposition to customers. During the first quarter of 1999, the growth rate for the company was one new salon every fortnight, one respondent explained:

“ ...it's growing at the rate of one every fortnight , which is very quick, it's not normally as quick as that, we've got a big growth rate at the moment”

(Managing director)

The head office is the control centre for all franchising activities. The modern premises also host a comprehensive training academy with salon and conference facilities, which are used to train Brush employees. The academy is also rented to other hair and beauty companies on an ad-hoc basis.

10.2.2 Organisational Culture and Strategy

The prevailing culture of Brush appears to be underpinned by strategic practices and procedures which are set in place. The competitive advantage of Brush is widely ascribed to the programmes in place and the codified ways of working, one respondent stated:

“ we have an advantage over other franchise companies starting now because we’ve had 25 years experience of the systems and policies in place which you don’t get overnight and if you are trying to compete with that you can’t”
(Managing director)

another respondent said:

“we have a written policy to everything we do which is why we are years ahead of a lot of competition, and if there isn’t a policy and someone asks, then we will make sure it’s there because if you’ve got it written down then you’ve got a system by which people can measure standards” (Marketing manager)

A culture of quality awareness and measurement appears to be active within Brush. Standards are present to ensure a consistent quality of service throughout the whole franchise chain and a customer charter exists to promote these standards to customers and staff. At an organisational wide level benchmarking with 'big companies' both within and outside the industry is used to gauge quality. Measurement of standards within the salons occurs through an established appraisal system and a mystery client research programme. Comprehensive training for franchisees and staff reinforces rules and procedures which relate to customer care, staff appearance and interaction with customers. In addition to technical hair and beauty training, service experience elements are highly valued. One respondent explained:

"there is a whole series of rules about what people can talk about in the salons, a junior is not allowed to say 'are you going out tonight ? ' so we teach our staff what to say and we build their communication skills and their presentation skills..... they are taught about social skills and role play" (Marketing manager)

A network of Regional managers exists to provide back up for franchisees to monitor and advise them on all business matters. Rather than perceiving the rules and procedures as autocratic, the dominant perception is that franchisees

welcome intervention. as, along with the right to display a successful brand, this is what they are buying.

Within an industry which traditionally has transient staffing problems, Brush seeks to enhance staff loyalty through the provision of a comprehensive career plan which focuses on training. One respondent spoke about the philosophy of Brush being to provide opportunity for team members:

“my philosophy of Brush is that it’s just one big opportunity for all team members from marketing or customer care person or franchisee or junior it’s just full of opportunities. You know you can expand yourself in so many different aspects just take on board the opportunities” (Regional manager)

One career route staff are able to take is to join the ‘artistic team’ and represent the company on stage at exhibitions, fashion shows and photographic shoots. The competitive nature of such high profile work runs throughout Brush and is used as a motivational and staff loyalty building devise. A yearly Brush conference open to all employees is central to team building and motivation and it is strongly enshrined within the competitive culture. The conference provides an opportunity for individuals and teams of high achievers at all levels to be recognised through competitions and special awards. A respondent noted the motivational effect of being involved at the conference:

“(the conference) is the best day of your lives, it’s exciting, it’s motivational and at the end of the day I’m very competitive so I’ll do anything to beat other people. Everyone has the same instincts, it’s the level you push yourselves to”
(Salon manager)

In addition to awards, the conference is used to launch new collections, trends, techniques and to keep everyone informed about strategic developments. The atmosphere of the conference is akin to the ‘glitzy’ industry awards which are described by one respondent as being *“like the hairdressing Oscars”* with the presence of celebrity hairdressers. This atmosphere enhances the underlying culture. Brush aims to generate an internal culture reflecting a high profile and leading edge image within the industry. A ‘franchisee only’ international conference is also held and this is designed to promote a sense of involvement in the business and increase awareness of strategic issues.

One limitation of interviews within a case setting is that sub cultures will remain undiscovered. For the purposes of this research however, this limitation is minimised as the core research purpose is not solely to unearth culture but rather to identify how the brand acts as a relationship building device.

Service quality and customer satisfaction are entwined (Eiriz, 1999). The culture of Brush is geared towards ensuring a culture of service quality. As service

quality and satisfaction can be experienced at both an episode and relationship level (Storbacka, 1995) through the prescribed routines and standards, Brush appears to be in a position to ensure that every episode experience is consistent. Equally at a brand relationship level, each salon visited should be consistent with the quality standards expected and so satisfaction should be maintained. A culture of internal marketing also appears to be present particularly with the well designed series of courses and motivational conferences. Buttle (1996) views internal marketing as a function of relationship marketing as a whole;

“the goal of internal marketing is to convert employees to the new culture, to persuade them that it is sensible to buy into the new vision and to motivate them to develop and implement relationship marketing strategies” page 12

Although there is not a formally recognised relationship marketing strategy the role of the conference clearly is to motivate and to develop staff involvement in strategic issues.

10.2.3 Brand Strategy and Positioning

The brand positioning of Brush was universally reported by all respondents to be:

“High street, high profile, high price”

It appears that Brush had formalised this brand positioning strategy and communicated this to franchisees. Part of this positioning is the desire to promote Brush as an aspiration brand. A respondent summed the mission by saying:

“I think we want people to think wow Brush, it’s not exactly household in that Persil and Daz being household, it’s not high street in the sense of Kwik Save being but we want people to aspire to go there and by goodness they know the name..... in most towns we are the most expensive salon in the town and we will look at what other salons are charging, Brush isn’t cheap but it’s something you want to aspire to go to” (Marketing manager)

To promote an aspirational image, discounts are eliminated throughout the group and complimentary offers are used instead. A complimentary cut and finish and facial or back massage may be offered. This is to encourage a “fantastic” service experience and lure the client back. In areas where a new salon is opening targeted mailings are sent to prospective clients offering complimentary services.

The unique selling proposition of Brush was described as the equal importance paid to beauty services as hair services within salons to promote a ‘complete package’:

“one of our USP’s is that we are the only high street national hair and beauty company so we decided that we need to exploit that and go to the top”
(Managing director)

A consistent brand message across the group is considered vital and this is ensured through an in-house design team responsible for a uniform corporate look for promotional material for all target audiences, salon accessories and tools and take home products for the consumer. The training procedures used for staff is also designed with this consistency in mind where the aim is to provide an identical service no matter which team member or salon the client visits. The aim is to build a long-term commitment to the brand rather than individual staff members.

10.2.4 Brand Personality

All respondents interviewed were given the same brand personality measurement scale (Aaker, 1995) as in the customer survey in order to ease comparison between these two groups. As the sample size for the interviews is small however, it would lead to misleading results if any statistical generalisations were made. Instead the scale provides a guide to ground the perceptions of senior staff regarding the personality of the brand.

In general, the items that were scored highly by the majority of respondents were:

- Sincerity facet -Friendly, cheerful, original and sincere.
- Excitement facet - Imaginative, excited and spirited.
- Competence facet – Successful, reliable and leader.
- Sophistication facet – Upper class
- Ruggedness – no items were scored highly

This ‘guide’ to the brand personality is consistent with the information provided throughout the interviews regarding Brush culture and brand strategy.

10.2.5 Relationship

Relationships built with customers of Brush can occur on two levels. As with many service brands, an opportunity exists for the customer and staff members to build an interpersonal relationship. This is either independently or in conjunction with the relationship the customer has with the brand. The aim of Brush as a company is to build a strong brand level relationship. This is to provide protection from the loss of customers should team members leave the salon to work elsewhere. Loosing customers in this manner is common within the

industry. Although a formal relationship marketing strategy was not recognised by the company, several initiatives exist that enable relationships to develop.

As all team members are trained identically in terms of techniques and customer care, Brush try to promote combined team effort so clients do not become dependent on one team member:

“we are training our team to cut hair in the same way, cutting techniques and beauty techniques as well so that you could probably know a Brush cut if you know about those things so there is consistency so if you come in and Johnny is ill, you think oh, and someone says well Creeda’s here and she’ll look after you, we know the way Johnny cuts your hair” (Marketing Manager)

One respondent spoke about how some clients even rotate amongst stylists. They have one stylist to wash, one to cut and another to dry and this practice is encouraged by Brush.

Another respondent also observing this practice saw it as the way that over time relationships are built with the whole team:

“over a period of time two different people have styled their (the clients) hair and if they like, some people click, there is clicking in technical ability as well as

personality so they may want a senior stylist to cut but, love the way a junior dries the hair, they also want the personalities behind the haircut” (Franchisee)

A dominant perception among respondents is that the developing relationship is predominantly between the salon staff and the customer with the Brush brand being responsible mainly for bringing customers to the salons in the first place:

“ at the end of the day Brush is a brand which draws people in, when people are in they find personalities, it is very rare the personalities bring the people in the first place it’s Brush first and then importantly the personalities come afterwards” (Regional manager)

The provision of additional services and complimentary extras such as sample product packs and ‘home plans’ provide a tangible aspect to the service. Such tangible items enable brand reinforcement in the customers’ every day environments. Brush views these additional services as an integral part of offering a bespoke service where a one to one relationship can be built. A consultation programme which involves the team members becoming aware of the customer lifestyle and needs also helps relationships:

“clients are given a home care plan to take into account all your needs which is developing commitment with the client so if you know she has a wedding coming

up, she's going on holiday in four months time, she's a bit stressed, she has a family life as well as a job, you can build her a whole programme which makes her feel loved and you also have her commitment" (Beauty director)

These programmes not only provide the opportunity to build a relationship but to increase the number of services that the customer will use. For example by initially offering a complimentary shoulder massage to hair clients or a wash and style for women having facials, Brush respondents believed that they are provided services over and above those received elsewhere and investing in the long term increased commitment of clients. A simple yet important part of the consultation philosophy is ensuring that the client has made the next appointment whilst still in the salon.

Brush trains its team members to be aware of the relationship needs of the individual clients and to recognise that it takes time to build a strong relationship:

A salon based respondent explained:

"if you are good at your job you know which ones come for the experience of a haircut or for personal contact. If you have a new client you might spend a large percentage of the time talking about the individual and listening to the individual and finding out what the individual is really wanting" (Salon manager)

The re-launch of the company magazine for customers to take home again provides a tangible feature of the service encounter and it also provides the opportunity for clients to learn more about Brush. An important element for building relationships identified within the literature review was the perception of relationship partners disclosing information about themselves. Particularly within intimate service industries self-disclosure is one of the most important attributes (Stern, 1997).

Overall, several relationship building initiatives are used by Brush which enable bonds to be built with clients. Following analysis of interviews, as discussed in chapter seven, a staff survey was conducted. The survey was conducted for triangulation purposes. Investigating the case setting from multiple perspectives enabled a richer and more valid contextual understanding. Within a service setting where front line staff shape customers brand perceptions, it is even more vital to incorporate their views into the case story.

10.3 STAFF SURVEY FINDINGS

The survey gathered data relating to staff perceptions of the Brush brand and relationships with customers. The methodology and sample characteristics have already been discussed within chapter seven (section 7.3) and so do not need to

be covered again. Each of the topics investigated within the survey are summarised and following content analysis, coded responses can be seen in each of the tables. Within qualitative research it is not appropriate to carry out statistical analysis to codes and to produce means of similar responses. It is useful however to weight codes and themes to observe the strength of perception and so summaries tables have been produced to show the number of respondents whose responses fell within the themes identified. Miles and Huberman (1994) stated that there are three good reasons to resort to numbers when analysing qualitative research these are;

1. to see rapidly what you have in a large batch of data
2. to verify a hunch or hypothesis
3. to remain analytically honest and protect against bias

The third of these reasons is considered very important within this research as greater researcher time was spent with non salon based members face to face than with salon based staff and so a tendency to weight more heavily the views identified within the interviews could exist.

First, respondents were questioned about their perception of the Brush brand.

10.3.1 Perception of Brush Brand

The perception of the brand was measured through Aaker's (1994) brand personality measurement scale. The brand personality facets within Aaker's measurement scale composite means reflect the findings of the senior personnel.

The Competence and Excitement facets had the highest composite mean. As found within the interviews the Rugged facet is least descriptive of the Brush brand personality. When the individual items that make up the facets are considered, the personality characteristics which are rated highly are:

- Sincerity facet - Cheerful;
- Excite facet – Up to date;
- Competence facet – Confident and Hardworking

These items mean scores equalled 7 indicating that they are 'extremely descriptive' of the brand. Importantly, the items had small standard deviations and the minimum score assigned by any respondent was 6. Team members' views of the brand personality replicated those discovered during interviews with key informants. This is vital for the brand to maintain consistency throughout the group. In addition to questions about brand personality, team members were also asked:

“What do you think makes a Brush salon different to other salons?”

This first question was followed by:

“What efforts are made within the salon to convey these differences to the customer?”

There was little variance in the responses to these questions. The responses also matched the views of key company informants.

It was widely recognised that the quality of staff and particularly the comprehensive consultation programme played major roles in brand differentiation. All of the points of differentiation identified by the team members were confirmed by at least one other respondent. Table 10.1 outlines the findings.

Table 10.1 Perceived brand differentiation

What do you think makes a Brush salon different to other salons?	
Code	Number of respondents stating
1. Consultation programme	8
2. Quality of staff	6
3. Training and education	5
4. Quality of service	5
5. Corporate image	4
6. Salon atmosphere	4
7. Customer care	4
8. Visible customer charter	4
9. Attention to detail	3
10. Additional extras	2
11. Leading edge	2

There was much overlap between what was considered as brand differentiation and the efforts made within salons to convey differences to the customer. Buying into promotional material and PR is the lowest level of investment franchisees are able to make in the franchise structure. This is therefore likely to be a universal factor throughout the group. The provision of additional extras and complimentary services, the staff approach, training, the quality of service, salon atmosphere and corporate image were all identified within both sets of responses. The most mentioned effort made within the salon to differentiate was the use of promotion and PR. The salon efforts that were reported by respondents can be seen in Table 10.2.

Table 10.2 Salon based points of differentiation

What efforts are made within the salon to convey these differences to the customer?	
Code	Number of respondents stating
1. Promotion and PR	5
2. Additional extras/complimentary	4
3. Company policies and procedures	4
4. Visible customer charter	4
5. Mystery shopper to check	3
6. Friendly staff approach	3
7. Team work	3
8. Training	3
9. Regular staff meetings	1
10. Quality of service	1
11. Salon atmosphere	1
12. Corporate image	1

Within the interviews with key informants, the issues identified within Table 10.2 were discussed as ways in which salons can help to build relationships with customers.

10.3.2 The Relationship with Customers

When questioned about whether the relationship customers have with Brush is primarily with the staff or the brand there was a mixed response. Some team members strongly believed that the relationship was with staff, others thought it was with the brand and some saw it as a dual relationship with both staff and the brand as equally important.

Of those who considered the relationship to be with staff, the majority attributed this to the rapport that team members build with established clientele and the friendliness shown towards clients. Others viewed the personal service that staff show clients and, one respondent thought that good staff would be able to ‘sell’ any brand. The respondents who stated that the relationship was with the brand, considered this due to the brand’s high profile and consistent message. The respondents who thought the relationship existed jointly with the brand and the staff identified several reasons. The majority of these respondents saw the brand as being a ‘drawing in’ device where the relationship started with the brand and was later followed by relationships with staff. Staff level relationships were

thought to develop over time. Two respondents considered staff to be synonymous with the brand. This view often documented within services branding literature (Bateson, 1995). Another respondent considered the brand to be responsible for building client esteem whilst, staff built the salon atmosphere. Both elements are important for relationship building. Finally, one respondent stated that the relationship would be developed according to the customers needs. This respondent thought that for some customers the relationship would be with the staff and for others, it would be the brand. Table 10.3 outlines the coded responses.

Table 10.3 Relationship with the brand or staff

Please explain why you think the relationship is with the brand or the staff.	
Code	Number of respondents stating
1. Rapport built with established clientele by staff	5
2. Friendly staff	5
3. 1st with brand and then staff	4
4. Consistency of brand across group and it's high profile	3
5. Personal service by staff encourages return	2
6. Quality of service provided by staff	2
7. Brand and staff approach synonymous	2
8. Both are important Brand – esteem provider Staff – atmosphere creators	1
9. Good staff sell any brand	1
10. Depends on client – some come for salon others for staff	1
11. Brand provides the atmosphere	1

While considering the initiatives taken at a company level to build relationships maintaining strategic company policies and substantial training were thought to be important by respondents. Calling clients, to check satisfaction had not been discussed during interviews with key informants. Three respondents from different salons reported calling clients, and so the practice was not unique to one franchise. At a corporate level, respondents were able to discuss relationship building strategies, Table 10.4 outlines the findings.

Table 10.4 Company level RM initiatives

What initiatives are taken at a company level to build relationships with customers?	
Code	Number of respondents stating
1. Company policies maintained	6
2. Training	6
3. Ensuring friendly staff	4
4. Promotion and PR	4
5. Consultation programme	3
6. Call clients to check satisfied	3
7. Guiding clients in styles and trends	2
8. Customer care programme	2
9. Consistency across salons	1
10. Staff competitions and incentives	1
11. Brand and marketing programme	1

At a personal level, staff recognised the role they played in building relationships in addition to a high standard of customer care the need to provide information and advise clients appeared equally important.

Table 10.5 Staff role in relationship building

What is your personal role in building relationships with customers and how do you attempt to do this?	
Code	Number of respondents stating
1. Customer care	8
2. Provide information for clients / advise	8
3. Team working	6
4. Friendly approach	5
5. Creating a one to one service	4
6. Listen to clients needs	3
7. Project confidence	3
8. Keep up to date with trends	2
9. Build a rapport	1
10. Boost client esteem	1

Overall, the qualitative phase of research showed that attention to building relationships with customers occurred at corporate and salon levels. Internal marketing and training programmes were viewed as imperative to retaining both staff and customers. A consistent brand message throughout the group was helped because of the franchise network as salon owners invested heavily in the brand. Opinions of senior management and team members were consistent with regard to Brush as a service brand and the relationships formed with customers. The customer's perception will now be added to complete analysis of the Brush case.

10.4 QUANTITATIVE CUSTOMER SURVEY FINDINGS

The design of the customer survey has been discussed in chapter eight and so there is no need to discuss it again within this case findings chapter. Also, the statistical tests applied and issues relating to validity and reliability were explored in chapter nine. The measurement scales used within the survey were shown to be valid and reliable.

Specific characteristics of the Brush sample show that respondents were professional (50%) females (72%) falling in the 25-55 year age bracket (81%) and so are representative of the target market described by Brush personnel. 70% of respondents had used the Brush salons for over a year and 89% visited the salons more than 6 times a year and so it can be assumed that they have experience of the brand. Respondents tended not to use the beauty services with only 13% having beauty treatments and the majority (60%) opting for hair cuts and 26% have specialised hair treatments such as colouring or perming.

The survey results shall be interpreted in view of the hypotheses within this research, although not all are testable within a single case study as some such as the fifth hypothesis relating to the different forms of relationship strategy, are

dependent on comparisons between cases. The results for Brush are structured according to each testable hypothesis. Each hypothesis will be taken in turn and its findings discussed. The first hypothesis considered relationship quality.

10.4.1 The quality of each type of relationship consumers may have with their brands.

Hypothesis one stated that:

- a. High overall BRQ scores will be found in the following relationship types which are ordered according to their expected strength;
 - committed partnership
 - dependency
 - childhood friend

- b. Medium overall BRQ scores will be found in the following relationship types which are ordered according to their expected strength;
 - courtship
 - flings
 - casual friendship

- c. Low overall BRQ scores will be found in the following relationship type;
 - enslavement

The first hypothesis can be tested solely within a single case study. The measures used for this hypothesis were the metaphorical relationship types and Fournier's (1994) Brand Relationship Quality scale.

10.4.1.1 Relationship Type

Table 10.6 shows the distribution of relationship types within the sample. Committed partnerships were the most frequently perceived relationship with flings being the least common relationship. No enslavement relationships were identified.

Table 10.6 Which of the following types of personal relationship best describes your association with the brand?

Relationship Type	Percentage (All respondents) n=115
Committed partnership	27.8
Childhood friend	16.5
Casual friend	15.7
Courtship	15.7
Dependency	10.4
Other	8.7
Fling	5.2
Enslavement	0

Respondents were asked to identify an alternative relationship if those provided were not appropriate for their situation. The reason for this was to avoid forced compliance. The 10 verbatim comments from the 'other' category are as follows:

1. Pleasant necessity
2. Person that you feel you have known for a long while even if you haven't
3. A typical client/ supplier relationship. When I become dissatisfied I will source another supplier
4. What a customer /client relationship should be - impartial
5. Trusted , honest, reliable
6. Visit to see a recently made friend
7. Comfortable friendship
8. Steady relationship – we feel entirely comfortable together as long as this lasts we'll stay together
9. Like my family
10. service

None of these additional comments were negative and appear to result either from respondents not being able to imagine a metaphorical relationship (2 comments), not wanting to ascribe a personal relationship to a service brand (3 comments) or, another metaphorical relationship was perceived to be more appropriate (5 respondents identified different forms of friendship).

The majority of relationships can be described as positive, which in line with the hypothesis suggests that a strong BRQ is to be expected for Brush.

10.4.1.2 The BRQ

To calculate BRQ, composite means were taken for each individual facet of the measuring instrument before being taken as a whole construct. A seven point Likert scale was used where 1 = 'strongly disagree' and 7 = 'strongly agree'.

The means for each facet indicate that partner quality and the love facets are rated highest among respondents within the BRQ whilst there is a low score for the intimacy facet.

Table 10.7 Composite means for each BRQ facet

BRQ Facet	Mean	Std. Deviation
Partner quality	6.02	1.187
Love	5.19	2.688
Personal commitment	4.40	3.541
Passionate attachment	3.96	3.390
Self concept connection	3.72	3.409
Nostalgic connection	3.60	2.834
Intimacy	3.49	3.311

The perceived closeness of the relationship will have implications for the brand-relationship quality. Respondents were asked whether they considered the relationship to be too close, just right or not close enough. The table below shows that almost 95% of respondents felt that the closeness of the relationship was just right and so even though perceived 'intimacy' is low, it could be that hair salon clients just do not want a relationship which is very close. This would also be consistent with the higher than average number of 'avoidant' attachment styles demonstrated by respondents.

Table 10.8 Perceived relationship closeness

Perceived closeness n=115	Percentage
The relationship is too close	0
The relationship is just right	94.8
The relationship is not close enough	5.2

To test whether there is any difference in BRQ between the different relationship groups' descriptive statistics show that it is possible to rank relationships according to BRQ. The rank order for relationships in terms of mean BRQ can be seen in table 10.9:

Table 10.9 Mean BRQ Score for each relationship type

Rank	Relationship	Mean BRQ	Expected relationship in rank
1	Dependency	37.7	Committed partnership (high)
2	Committed partnership	36.8	Dependency (high)
3	Other	32.7	Childhood friend (high)
4	Childhood friend	30.7	Courtship (med)
5	Courtship	24.9	Fling (med)
6	Casual Friend	21.8	Casual friendship (med)
7	Fling	18.4	Enslavement (low)

There was not an expected rank within the hypothesis for the 'Other relationship' category. This means that childhood friendships and courtship are ordered as expected and deviances from the expected rank occur between committed partnership and dependency, and also between fling and casual friendship.

To test for significance, One way ANOVA was used to test the null hypothesis that 'there is no difference in the BRQ between relationship types'.

Table 10.10 One way ANOVA - There is no difference in BRQ between relationship types

	Sum of squares	Degrees of freedom	Mean sum of squares	F ratio	Significance
Between group	4719.080	6	786.513	11.705	.000
Within group	7256.726	108	67.192		
Total	11975.806	114			

In this case the within group variance is greater than the between group variance which means that the null hypothesis can be rejected. The ratio of explained to unexplained variance i.e. $786.5/67.2$ providing an F ratio of 11.7 is highly significant and there is a 0% chance of making a mistake by rejecting the null hypothesis. Relationship types do therefore vary in terms of BRQ.

Now a difference between relationships has been identified, Post hoc analysis enables closer investigation about which relationships are significantly different from each other.

Table 10.11 indicates where significant differences arise at the .05 level.

Table 10.11 Post hoc analysis results

	Committed partnership	Courtship	Fling	Casual friend	Childhood friend	Dependency	Other
Committed partnership	-	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Courtship	✓	-			✓	✓	✓
Fling	✓		-		✓	✓	✓
Casual friend	✓			-	✓	✓	
Childhood friend	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	
Dependency		✓	✓	✓	✓	-	
Other		✓	✓	✓			-

Key:

‘-’ = no significant difference

‘✓’ = significant difference identified at 0.5 level

There is no significant difference of BRQ scores between dependency and committed partnership, which shows that the difference in the top ranking relationships from what was expected is small. The same is true for lower ranking relationships of fling and casual friendships.

Conclusions can be drawn about hypothesis one for the Brush case which is partially supported. The overall rank order of the relationship types within high, medium and low categories can be supported. Differences in BRQ scores can be observed between the high, medium and low categories. There is no significant difference however in BRQ scores within the high and medium categories. This means that it was not possible to order committed partnerships, dependencies and childhood friendships within the high BRQ group. The same is true of the medium BRQ groups where the predicted order of flings and casual friendships did not occur.

Each type of relationship was also considered within the second hypothesis.

10.4.2 The effect of consumer personality on the likelihood to enter different types of relationship.

The second hypothesis outlines that:

- a. Secure individuals will be more satisfied within and more likely to enter committed partnerships, courtships, childhood friendships and casual friendships.

- b. Anxious individuals will be more satisfied within and more likely to enter childhood friendships and dependent relationships.

- c. Avoidant individuals will be more satisfied within and more likely to enter flings and casual friendships

In order to test this hypothesis the measures used were satisfaction, quality, the relationship type and attachment style.

10.4.2.1 Satisfaction and quality

Table 10.12 shows that across all the dimensions of satisfaction within the scale devised by Crosby and Stephens (1987), Brush scored highly. On the 7 point Likert scale with 7 represented 'highly satisfied'.

Table 10.12 Mean satisfaction

n=115	Mean	Standard deviation
Satisfaction with contact persons	6.29	1.07
Satisfaction with the core service	6.34	.89
Satisfaction with the salon	6.19	.97
Overall satisfaction	6.32	.94

Mean quality was also scored highly on all dimensions.

Table 10.13 Mean quality

n=115	Mean	Standard deviation
Quality of contact persons	6.35	1.13
Quality of the core service i.e. the style	6.48	.85
Quality of the salon	6.16	1.02
Overall satisfaction	6.37	.95

Satisfaction and quality were correlated to check the validity of their assumed association. Both the satisfaction and quality scales were shown to be reliable within the Brush case with an alpha of .8830. Mean quality and mean satisfaction were shown to be significantly correlated at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) with a correlation co-efficient of .588. With high levels of satisfaction and quality, relationship encounters are expected to be positive (Eiriz, 1999). However, as pointed out within the theory development chapter, personality may also play a role in relationship satisfaction.

10.4.2.2 Attachment style

Composite means were taken for scores on the attachment style measurement scale and respondents were grouped according to the attachment style they showed prevalence towards. Table 10.14 shows the distribution of attachment style groups:

Table 10.14 Attachment style

Attachment style	Percentage
Secure	46.1
Anxious	12.2
Avoidant	34.8
No predominant disposition	7.0
Total respondents n=115	

A greater than expected number of respondents fell within the avoidant category. Within interpersonal relationship research Simpson (1990) observed that 70% usually fall into the secure category whilst, the remaining 30% are equally split between the anxious and avoidant categories. Within this research Brush clients showed greater avoidant characteristics. This does not necessarily reflect the attachment style respondents project within their interpersonal relationships, it may be an assumed attachment style applied just whilst using the service brand. It could be that customers unconsciously prefer to avoid close relationships, or like 'to be seen' to demonstrate avoidant behaviour no matter how satisfied they are with the service provider. Table 10.15 shows relationship types expected to be entered by different attachment groups.

The expected relationships for each of the attachment groups are:

Table 10.15 Attachment group preferred relationship predictions

Attachment group	Expected relationship
Secure	Committed partnership Courtship Childhood friendship Casual friendship
Anxious	Childhood friendship Dependency
Avoidant	Flings Casual friendship

Chi square tests were then carried out to assess whether respondents within the different attachment styles enter predicted versus non predicted relationships. It was necessary to group relationships in this manner in order to ensure predicted cell numbers exceed 5 as is required within Chi square. Results from the chi square tests are shown in table 10.16.

Table 10.16 Chi Square results

Attachment style	Prediction	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Secure total 53	Predicted relationships	36	26.5	9.5
	Unpredicted relationships	17	26.5	-9.5
Anxious total 14	Predicted relationships	2	7	-5.0
	Unpredicted relationships	12	7	5.0
Avoidant total 40	Predicted relationships	10	20	-10.0
	Unpredicted relationships	30	20	10.0

It can be seen from the Chi square results that secure individuals tend to enter their predicted relationships, anxious and avoidant individuals however enter relationships they were not expected to.

Whether there is any difference in the level of satisfaction between those who have predicted relationships as opposed to those in unexpected relationship types can now be explored. One- way ANOVA tests for each of the three attachment groups were used with the null hypothesis that ‘there is no difference between the satisfaction levels of those in the predicted relationships versus the unexpected relationships’.

For secure individuals the between-group variance (the residual) is smaller than the within-group variance and if the null hypothesis is rejected, there is a 41% chance of error. Secure respondents therefore do not vary in their satisfaction no matter which type of relationship they have with Brush. The test results for secure respondents are shown in table 10.17.

Table 10.17 One way ANOVA - There is no difference in satisfaction between secure respondents in predicted versus unexpected relationship types.

	Sum of squares	Degrees of freedom	Mean sum of squares	F ratio	Significance
Between group	.392	1	.392	.663	.419
Within group	30.129	51	.591		
Total	30.519	52			

With Anxious individuals, even though the between-group variance is smaller than the within-group variance and there is 63% risk of wrongly rejecting the null hypothesis. This means that the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. There is no difference in satisfaction between anxious respondents who entered the relationships they were expected to rather than alternative relationship types.

Table 10.18 shows the ANOVA results.

Table 10.18 One-way ANOVA - There is no difference in satisfaction between anxious respondents in predicted versus unexpected relationship types.

	Sum of squares	Degrees of freedom	Mean sum of squares	F ratio	Significance
Between group	.190	1	.190	.163	.693
Within group	14.010	12	1.168		
Total	14.201	13			

ANOVA tests for Avoidant individuals show that there is greater between-group variance than within-group variance and in this case the null hypothesis can be rejected as there is only a 1% chance that this would be wrong. It is therefore possible to say that satisfaction does differ significantly between respondents who entered relationships they were expected to, rather than those they were not expected to. This can be seen in Table 10.19

Table 10.19 One way ANOVA - There is no difference in satisfaction between avoidant respondents in predicted versus unexpected relationship types.

	Sum of squares	Degrees of freedom	Mean sum of squares	F ratio	Significance
Between group	80138	1	8.138	12.695	.001
Within group	24.360	38	.641		
Total	32.498	39			

Independent T-tests show that there is a small variation in mean satisfaction. Avoidant individuals in unexpected relationships are marginally more satisfied than those in predicted relationships.

Table 10.20 Independent t test results for Avoidant respondents

Avoidant respondents satisfaction	N	Mean	Standard deviation	Standard Mean Error
Respondents within predicted relationships	10	5.40	1.04	.33
Respondents within unexpected relationships	30	6.44	.71	.13

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances exceeds the typical .05 significance level (0.85) and so the equal variance estimate for the t-test provides a significance level of 1%. These results are shown in table 10.21. The results mean that differences in avoidant respondents' satisfaction are statistically significant. This

finding clearly contradicts the hypothesis that avoidant individuals will be more satisfied in flings and casual friendships.

Table 10.21 Independent samples test for Avoidant respondents' satisfaction

	Levene's test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of means		
	F	Significance	t	Degrees of freedom	Significance (two tailed)
Equal variances assumed	3.125	.085	-3.563	38	.001
Equal variances not assumed			-2.942	11.905	.012

Even though there is a difference in the satisfaction levels between avoidant respondents, on the whole both groups scores exceeded the mid point on the 7 point scale where 7 = highly satisfied. As 75% of avoidant individuals identify relationships that were not expected, the argument that respondents are projecting a more guarded attachment style with regard to their service relationships than they may do with their interpersonal relationships gains credibility. Because these respondents' 'actual' attachment styles may be ones other than avoidant, they may be within the relationship types appropriate for their 'actual' styles.

Conclusions for hypothesis two within the Brush case are that the hypothesis cannot be supported. Although secure individuals are more likely enter the relationships they were expected to, there was no difference in the level of satisfaction between respondents entering predicted relationships and those in

unexpected relationships. Anxious individuals were more likely to enter unexpected relationships and there was no difference in their level of satisfaction. Avoidant individuals were also more likely to enter unexpected relationships and if they did so were significantly more satisfied.

The third hypothesis also considered attachment style, this time with regard to the brand personalities different attachment groups are most likely to prefer as relationship partners.

10.4.3 The effect of consumer's attachment style on their brand preferences.

The third hypothesis stated that:

- a. Secure people will be highly satisfied with brands that rate highly in sincerity and competence traits.
- b. Anxious people will also be highly satisfied with brands that score highly on the sincerity trait .
- c. Avoidant people we can expect to be highly satisfied with brands that only have a low score in the sincerity trait.

To test the hypothesis mean satisfaction was applied along with attachment style and brand personality. Brand personality was measured using Aaker's (1995) scale.

There is no one single indicator of brand personality rather, an assessment is made regarding whether or not the five facets identified by Aaker are perceived to be representative of the brand or not. A 7 point Likert scale was used to measure the 42-item brand personality cues. Within the scale, 1 represented not at all descriptive and 7 signified highly descriptive.

Composite mean scores were generated for each of the five personality facets and these can be seen in table 10.22.

Table 10.22 Brand personality facet means

Brand personality facet	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Competence	115	5.64	1.08
Excitement	115	5.02	1.20
Sincerity	115	4.96	1.03
Sophistication	115	4.86	1.26
Ruggedness	115	2.76	1.48

Table 10.22 shows that all of the facets except 'ruggedness' are rated above the mid point of the scale but none achieve the 'highly descriptive' score of 7. It can be seen from the mean and standard deviations that 'competence' followed by

excitement and then sincerity are rated fairly highly as being descriptive characteristics of Brush's personality.

One-way ANOVA tests show whether different attachment groups perceive the brand personality facet differently. Results are outlined within table 10.23.

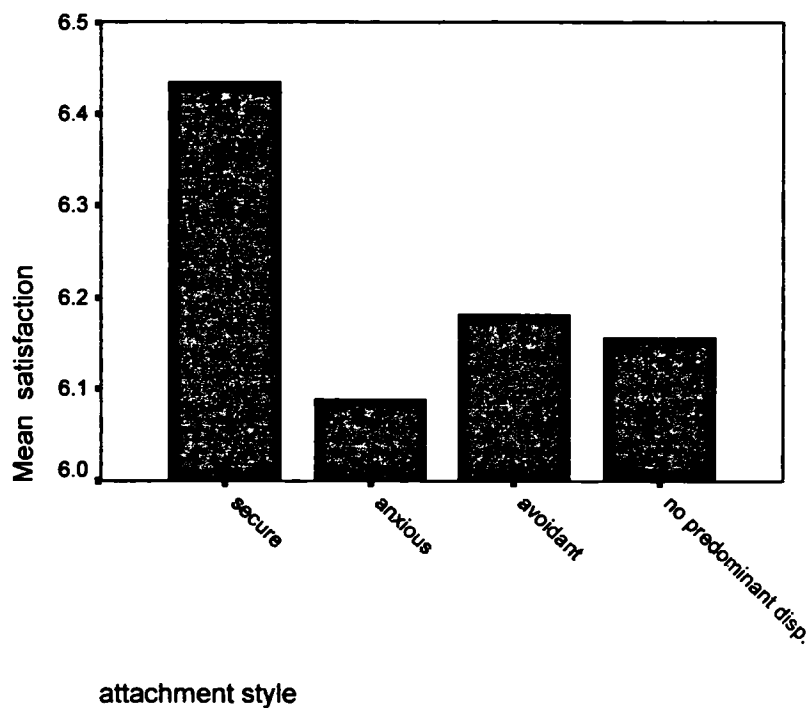
Table 10.23 ANOVA – HO There is no difference in different attachment groups mean scores for each of the brand personality types

Brand personality facet		Sum of squares	Degrees of freedom	Mean square	F	Significance
Sincerity mean	Within group	2.837	3	.946	.891	.448
	Between group	117.790	111	1.061		
	Total	120.627	114			
Excitement mean	Within group	3.768	3	1.256	.873	.458
	Between group	159.744	111	1.439		
	Total	163.512	114			
Competence mean	Within group	.225	3	7.496	.062	.980
	Between group	133.931	111	1.207		
	Total	134.156	114			
Ruggedness mean	Within group	10.823	3	3.608	1.67	.177
	Between group	237.117	110	2.156		
	Total	247.940	113			
Sophistication mean	Within group	3.973	3	1.324	.829	.481
	Between group	175.687	110	1.597		
	Total	179.660	113			

Table 10.23 shows that the within-group variance is greater than the between-group variance for all the brand personality facets which means that there is no difference between the brand personality perceptions of different attachment groups. No significant differences were generated during post hoc analysis.

Mean satisfaction comparisons between attachment styles can be seen in the figure 10.1. Although it appears from the graph that secure individuals are more satisfied than the other attachment groups, this satisfaction is only marginal as they all fall within the high score of 6 on the 7 point scale.

Figure 10.1 Mean satisfaction



To summarise the third hypothesis, the results show that in the Brush case the hypothesis cannot be supported. No differences in the levels of satisfaction were found by between attachment groups. All three groups perceived the brand personality similarly and so it is not appropriate to conclude that attachment style

played a role in preference for the brand. The fourth hypothesis moves used tested attachment style in its effects on determining opinions towards different relationship marketing techniques.

10.4.4 The effect of consumer's attachment style on the response to the form of relationship marketing.

The fourth hypothesis postulated that:

- a. Secure consumers will be best served and most satisfied within a relational strategy where customer-partnering strategies are incorporated.
- b. Anxious consumers will be best served and most satisfied within a relational approach but only when companies are in a position to keep promises and to maximise trust and provide the level of closeness required by the consumer.
- c. Avoidant subjects will be best served and most satisfied through a transactional approach as relationship approaches will lead to alienation.

To test the fourth hypothesis, mean satisfaction, attachment style, perception of closeness and a consideration of various forms of relationship marketing were applied. As an additional measure, respondents were asked about their general attitude towards different strategies often associated with relationship marketing.

It has been seen through investigation of previous hypotheses that there is no difference in satisfaction levels between different attachment groups. By looking at the perception of closeness in Table 10.8 it was seen that 95% of respondents thought that the closeness of the relationship was just right.

Although only a small percentage, the 5% who thought the relationship was not close enough would be expected to be anxious attachment individuals. In fact, table 10.24 shows that anxious individuals were the only group where all respondents stated the relationship was 'just right'. Interestingly no respondents said the relationship was too close as was expected with avoidant individuals.

Table 10.24 Relationship closeness split out by attachment group

Attachment style	Perceived relationship closeness	Percentage
Secure (n=53)	Too close	0
	Just right	94.3
	Not close enough	5.7
Anxious (n=14)	Too close	0
	Just right	100
	Not close enough	0
Avoidant (n=40)	Too close	0
	Just right	95
	Not close enough	5
No predominant disposition (n=8)	Too close	0
	Just right	87.5
	Not close enough	12.5

The qualitative stage of research showed that Brush makes an effort to listen to their clients and personalise the service. Gordon et.al (1998) would categorise this form of relationship marketing as 'personalisation' as the service is personalised for the consumer and strategies are used to encourage relationships between staff and clients. Lovelock (1983) proposed that where the nature of the service enables customisation individuals look to service personnel for advice which was a factor identified by salon staff. Also recognised was the need not only to advise clients but also to work with them to satisfy their needs. Within the context of hairdressing the client will be heavily involved in the service and will ultimately contribute to the service experience and so the style of relationship may be considered a form of customer partnering. Brush is therefore considered to use a relational approach of customer partnering rather than a transactional approach.

When asked how they felt about the use of various relationship strategies in general there was little difference between the three attachment groups on the 7 point scale where 1= strongly disapprove and 7= strongly approve. Where individuals had no predominant disposition towards any attachment style, the mean scores for the strategies were significantly lower. These can be seen in Table 10.25.

Table 10.25 Relationship marketing strategies as perceived by different attachment groups

Strategy	Secure mean	Anxious mean	Avoidant mean	No disp. mean
Frequent visitor programme	5.49	5.14	5.38	3.88
Company newsletters and updates	5.49	5.36	5.25	4.13
Corporate Magazines	5.02	4.64	4.98	3.88
Customer care training for staff	6.28	6.29	6.13	4.75
Open communications with customers	6.26	6.29	6.23	4.75
Database of customer details	5.89	5.57	5.80	4.13
Service personalised for the customer	6.45	6.21	6.45	4.88
Additional services for key customers	6.19	5.57	5.70	4.38
Mailings and promotions sent to customers	5.79	5.86	5.58	4.38
Special events cards/ gifts	5.87	6.00	5.45	5.00
Partnerships with other companies to provide additional services for customers	5.57	5.71	4.85	3.75

One- way ANOVA and post hoc analysis showed that significant differences exist at the .05 level between the following attachment groups with regard to relationship strategies. On the whole differences were found to be with those of no predominant disposition. Table 10.26 shows where differences arose.

Table 10.26 One-way ANOVA significant differences in opinions towards different relationship strategies.

Strategy	Significant Differences between
Frequent visitor programme	Secure/avoidant V's no disposition
Company newsletters and updates	Secure/avoidant V's no disposition
Corporate Magazines	No differences
Customer care training for staff	Secure/avoidant/anxious V's no disposition
Open communications with customers	Secure/avoidant/anxious V's no disposition
Database of customer details	Secure/avoidant/anxious V's no disposition
Service personalised for the customer	Secure/avoidant/anxious V's no disposition
Additional services for key customers	Secure/avoidant V's no disposition
Mailings and promotions sent to customers	Secure V's no disposition
Special events cards/ gifts	No differences
Partnerships with other companies to provide additional services for customers	Secure V's avoidant V's no disposition

To summarise hypothesis four, the hypothesis cannot be supported within the Brush case. All attachment groups were satisfied and there is no significant difference in the three attachment groups' opinions about different levels of relationship strategies. Different forms of relationship marketing strategy were also tested within the fifth hypothesis.

10.4.5 The effect of the style of relationship marketing strategy on the quality of the consumer – brand relationship.

The fifth hypothesis stated that:

- a. 'Lower level' database relationship marketing strategies involving one way intelligence gathering will lead to a low BRQ and the only relationship likely to develop under such circumstances would be 'enslavement' relationships.
- b. Customer partnering with truly dyadic two-way relationship building strategies leads to high a BRQ and positive relationships.
- c. Frequent, tangible people based interactions lead to strong BRQ but the relationship potentially exists between the consumer and the employees rather than with the brand
- d. Infrequent non face to face to intangible based interaction weakens the BRQ but the relationship is more likely to be with the brand.

Due to the nature of this hypothesis it is not possible to test all parts within a single case study. This is because a variety of relationship marketing strategies are required for comparison.

Within the Brush case only parts B and C of the hypothesis can be tested. It has already been discovered that Brush uses a customer partnering approach to building relationships, this finding naturally excludes part a of the hypothesis from analysis. The nature of hairdressing services require face to face and relatively frequent interactions and so part d can also be excluded from analysis.

For Part B, it has already been observed within hypothesis one that Brush generated high BRQ scores. With the relationship strategy identified as a customer partnering approach, this part of the hypothesis can be supported.

Part C requires an investigation of whether or not the relationship is perceived by customers to be with the staff or the brand. A mean score of 5.87 was generated when respondents were asked whether their relationship was with the brand or the staff. On a 7-point scale, 1 represented a perceived relationship with the brand and 7 represented a relationship with staff. The dominant perception was that the relationship is predominantly with the staff. A score of 5.87 however, shows that the brand is not forgotten altogether and does play a role in building the relationship. Overall, because the predominant relationship is with staff and because interactions are frequent and on a face to face basis, this part of the hypothesis can also be supported.

To summarise the findings from hypothesis five, parts b and c were tested within the Brush case setting and both were supported. High BRQ scores were achieved when a customer partnering strategy was in operation. In addition frequent, face to face interactions also contributed to a strong BRQ but the relationship was predominantly between customers and salon staff rather than between customers and the Brush brand. Within chapter 13, when all three cases with their different strategies are compared, further insight into this hypothesis will be possible.

10.5 CONCLUSION

To draw conclusions from the Brush case, not all of the hypotheses could be supported. Table 10.27 summarises where hypotheses either were or were not supported.

Table 10.27 Summary of support for hypotheses.

Summary of hypothesis	Supported ?
H1- The quality of each type of relationship consumers may have with their brands is dependent on the type of relationship between the parties.	Partially supported
H2 –Attachment style determines levels of satisfaction within and the types of relationships sought.	Not supported
H3 – Attachment style influences consumers' preferences for brands with particular personalities.	Not supported
H4- Attachment style will influence consumers' opinions towards different relationship marketing strategies.	Not supported
H5- Different forms of relationship marketing strategy will affect the brand relationship quality.	Testable parts B and C were supported

The case demonstrated that although broad BRQ scores could be assigned to relationship types, it is difficult to rank relationships with similar characteristics. Also, attachment style was not found to be a useful predictor in determining customers' relationship behaviour. This may be partly due to customers projecting a different attachment style for their relationships with Brush than they would within their interpersonal relationships. The customer partnering relationship strategy adopted by Brush is at least partly responsible for the strong BRQ. The relationship was however perceived by the customer to exist primarily with staff.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

COMB CASE FINDINGS

11.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the findings from the Comb case study. The chapter will be structured in the same way as the previous chapter which considered the Brush case. The first part of the chapter will look at the qualitative research phase before findings from the quantitative customer survey are discussed.

Again, the framework for the consumer-brand relationship framework will be applied to the qualitative findings. This is so the contextual richness of the case story can be preserved but the findings are grounded within the thesis.

Within the quantitative section, each hypothesis will be restated and analysed in turn. As was found within the other salon case, the hypotheses were not fully supported by Comb. Once again, the findings show that the relevance of attachment style to consumer-brand relationships should be questioned.

11.2. QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW FINDINGS

Research design and validity issues for the qualitative research phase were discussed in chapter seven and so will not be covered within this chapter. To

begin discussions regarding the Comb, case it is appropriate to first provide a case overview.

11.2.1. Comb Overview

Comb is one of a number of UK salon brands owned by an international hairstyling group. The UK represents only a small proportion of the group's market. Comb is one of the largest chains in the country. Although one of a number of brands within a global group, Comb operates under its own brand identity and is completely autonomous in its corporate strategy and marketing. The current portfolio of Comb salons grew because of a number of mergers and acquisitions. As a result, a diverse range of salon sites exists. Salons can be found within department stores, and increasingly freestanding locations within high streets and shopping centres.

11.2.2. Organisational Culture and Strategy

The culture within Comb is underpinned by the training and development of teams to provide a quality service. A dual philosophy is apparent where both business and creative perspectives are merged. An example of this joint philosophy can be viewed in terms of training. Regional managers who visit salons frequently, are responsible for training and developing salon managers in business issues. Their objective is to ensure the profitability of salons. An artistic team responsible for creating new collections and styling techniques also visit salon for training purposes. One respondent talked about the teams responsible for different areas of training:

“from a creative point of view it’s (person A) but from a training base it’s (person B) and I think to be honest (person B) would lean more towards a business approach whereas (person A) would be more towards a creative approach” (Marketing manager)

Training is considered particularly important for Comb to be a successful brand and is critical to a people-centred culture. The same respondent stated:

“hair and beauty is such an emotional people business, at the end of the day it’s people and how you develop your people” (Marketing manager)

another explained:

“it’s (the culture) is people-centred, we are all part of a team and the harder you work the better we reward you so, team member appraisals go through strengths and weaknesses and training is geared around what I give you to help overcome this gap” (Salon manager)

Reward, appraisals and motivational incentives appear to be ingrained in the culture and team members are encouraged to consider the benefits of performing well. Salon management and senior management conventions at exotic foreign locations are one such incentive:

“the conventions are great they are always somewhere exotic where people are very aware that it’s their reward for getting to be one of the best performers that has enabled them to be there” (creative director)

The propensity for building a strong career is also considered motivational within an industry where career prospects can be limited. Several respondents mentioned the opportunity to work with Comb as a ‘fantastic’ career move, an example quote is:

“many hairdressers that I know who do not work for Comb often say to me how much easier it is to structure a career within company like Comb which enables development and looks after it’s staff” (Training manager)

In addition, as part of a high trust culture Comb is considered very open in the amount of information it will share with team members:

“salon managers have access to quite a high level of information about their individual business and profit and loss really, I mean I’ve worked in the industry all my working life and I’ve worked for different groups at different times and the amount that Comb is prepared to share with their salon managers is far higher than anyone else” (Marketing manager)

Openness extends to internal campaigns, which educate the team about brand issues, rationale behind new collections and how these are fed into communication tools for positioning the brand externally. Manuals a published which provide details of the latest collections and direct stylists in cutting techniques. These manuals reinforce brand values and are considered to provide a point of differentiation for Comb as they are available to customers within the salons.

11.2.3. Brand Strategy and Positioning

Comb has recently undergone comprehensive re-branding programme in an attempt to realign its brand position and to consolidate all its brands following many acquisitions. During this time there was a greater emphasis on marketing activities (particularly promotional and target magazine advertising) than ever before. At this time the target market was redefined to be more specific and focus on 25-50 year old women who are successful and like to be fashionable but from the high street rather than at the cutting edge of extreme fashion. In terms of brand image and the image of its target customers, Comb aims to be:

“we’re going for something more attainable, more comfortable (than high fashion images of other chains) but not boring, it’s that thing that yes it’s contemporary but it’s not too edgy” (Marketing manager)

A service guarantee and mission which promises quality, service, value, training and guarantee underpin the brand strategy. This strategy has impact not only with customers who may have a refund and re-done style if they are not satisfied but also internally for staff that they can be proud to work with a leading salon chain.

The changes in brand strategy and the marketing activity to support this has enabled Comb to redefine the relationship with the department stores where some of its salons are located. Previously the stores wanted the salons to take on the store brand rather than have its own identity which had led to a confused brand identity for Comb, since the brands profile has been raised however stores are keen for the Comb brand to become dominant.

11.2.4. Brand Personality

As with the other case companies within this research all respondents interviewed were given the same brand personality measurement scale (Aaker, 1995) as in the customer survey in order to ease comparison between these two groups. With the small sample size the scale is used only as an indicator of personality.

In general, the items that were scored highly by the majority of respondents were:

- Sincerity facet – friendly, honest
- Excitement facet – up to date
- Competence facet – corporate
- Sophistication facet – glamorous
- Ruggedness – none featured strongly

These facets complement the brand strategy and positioning of an attainable, contemporary brand.

11.2.5. Relationship

Comb is of the few salons within the hairdressing industry to make use of technology to help build relationships. A database is used to store contact details

of customers and records of their visits to the salon and the treatments and products they have. The database enables specifically targeted mailings to be posted to customers and has been used for communicating things like the launch of a new collection to valued and profitable customers. Mail shots are mailed directly from the salons and include birthday cards offering a birthday treat discount to regular clients. The value of the database in building direct relationships with the customer is discussed:

“there are more elements that we’ve brought in over time to develop a direct relationship with the customer. Our salons have computers with databases and stock control systems. We are able to do mail shots from the salons directly to our customers and so we’ve got tools to use that develop even stronger relationships above and beyond that initial relationship with a particular hairdresser” (Marketing manager)

Several respondents spoke about the inevitable relationships that develop between clients and stylists over time, one considered this level of relationship as being important for the good of the brand:

“because clients need to be able to trust their stylist to create a style they will love and because it can be a risky and subjective end result personal relationships need to develop in order for trust to develop. If clients don’t trust their own stylist then they will not trust Comb as a company or brand”(Creative director)

Another respondent mentioned relationships being:

“the end result of excellent service” (Salon manager)

Comb regards ‘excellent service’ as stemming from the team effort and one of the main objectives is to build confidence in the entire team so that both interpersonal and brand level relationships are encouraged:

“from a company point of view it’s about balancing, you want the customer to feel the security within the feeling that it’s not just a little salon down a side street and thinking I don’t quite know what I’m going to get. So, it’s like yeah ok, it’s a big nation-wide and so on ..but it’s delivering a very localised personal service as well” (Marketing manager)

The importance of interpersonal relationships mean that staff need to be aware of the underlying relationship approach taken by Comb for building relationships with customers. The staff survey sought the views of front line staff. Consistency with the views of the key informants interviewed is important and will be assessed throughout the next section.

11.3. STAFF SURVEY FINDINGS

The survey sought data relating to the perception of team members of the Comb brand and relationships with customers.

11.3.1. Perception of Comb Brand

The perception of the brand was measured through Aaker's (1994) brand personality measurement scale and by asking team members:

“What do you think makes a Comb salon different to other salons?”

followed by:

“What efforts are made within the salon to convey these differences to the customer?”

The differences between Comb and other salons can be considered on both a customer level and a staff level. Team members perceived that to customers differences arise due to points relating to superior service and standards, advice and products so the style can be looked after at home and the salon and brand image. For team members differences arise due to the level of training they receive, improved career opportunities and the motivational incentives available. Responses can be seen in Table 11.1.

Table 11.1 Perception of brand differentiation

What do you think makes a Comb salon different to other salons?	
Code	Number of respondents stating
1. Customer service	7
2. Training	6
3. Career opportunities	3
4. Homecare products and advise	3
5. Image	3

6. Range of services	2
7. High standards	2
8. Team incentives	1
9. Marketing proficiency	1

The main efforts made within the salon to convey differences to the customer relate to high levels of service quality and the ability to guarantee consistent quality throughout the salons and between stylists. Points of differentiation were reported as the atmosphere within the salon and the existence of a national marketing and promotional campaign. Table 11.2 outlines the responses.

Table 11.2 Salon based differentiation tactics

What efforts are made within the salon to convey these differences to the customer?	
Code	Number of respondents stating
1. Consistency of service	5
2. Excellent service	5
3. Superior consultations	4
4. Service guarantee	4
5. Stylist training	4
6. Salon atmosphere	2
7. In store promotional material	1
8. Advertising in national magazines	1

The brand personality facets within Aaker's measurement scale composite means reflected the findings of the senior personnel. Within the individual facets the highest scoring items (e.g. above 6, on the 7 point scale where 7 = highly descriptive) were:

- Sincerity – friendly, honest, cheerful
- Excitement – Up to date
- Competence – Corporate, successful, hardworking
- Sophistication – Glamorous

- Ruggedness – no items scored achieved a high score (e.g. above 6)

The brand personality facets identified are consistent with those discussed during the interviews with Comb management. The brand can therefore be considered to be perceived consistently through the company.

11.3.2. The Relationship with Customers

Respondents were asked whether a relationship exists between the customer and the brand or the customer and salon team members. The majority of respondents considered the dominant relationship to be with the team members although some viewed the brand acting as a drawing in devise. This response had also been found within the Brush case study. Three respondents thought the relationship was predominantly with the brand because of its 'prestigious reputation'. Table 11.3 shows the coded responses.

Table 11.3 Relationship with the brand or staff

Please explain why you think the relationship is with the brand or the staff.	
Code	Number of respondents stating
1. Brand first and then staff	5
2. With regular clients it's staff due to interactions over time	4
3. Brand reputation	3
4. Team effort builds the relationship	2

At a corporate level, marketing and public relations were viewed as important methods for the company to build relationships with customers. Other reasons related to encouragement of a quality service and positive interactions between staff and clients.

Table 11.4 Company level RM initiatives

What initiatives are taken at a company level to build relationships with customers?	
Code	Number of respondents stating
1. PR and marketing	6
2. Training in customer care	5
3. Superior consultations	5
4. Professionalism encouraged	3

The personal roles that team members considered they played in building strong relationships were also concerned with providing a positive service encounter. Encouraging a pleasant atmosphere where clients felt comfortable, their needs would be listened to and honest advice could be obtained was considered important. Table 11.5 outlines these views.

Table 11.5 Staff role in relationship building

What is your personal role in building relationships with customers and how do you attempt to do this?	
Code	Number of respondents stating
1. Encourage comfort	6
2. Establish clients needs	4
3. Feel good feeling instilled	4
4. Honesty with clients	3
5. Thorough consultation	2
6. Enable style changes	2
7. Remembering clients	1
8. Encourage next appointment booking	1

Overall, the qualitative phase of research illustrates the aim of Comb to develop a culture orientated around profitable business strategy in conjunction with a creative environment. This culture was reflected in the approach taken to build relationships with customers. Although the company developed a database marketing strategy, concern for other relationship building devices such as encouraging a rapport between customers and staff were included.

How customers perceive their relationship with Comb can now be discussed in respect to the quantitative findings of the quantitative study.

11.4. QUANTITATIVE CUSTOMER SURVEY FINDINGS

The methodology for the quantitative survey was covered within chapter eight and so will not be repeated here. Details of the sample were also discussed, however, specific characteristics of the Comb sample will be quickly reviewed.

The characteristics of Comb respondents showed that the majority were professional (58%) females (76%) falling in the 25-55 year age bracket (76%). The highest percentage group among this age range was the 25-35 group (31%) which was the target market identified by Comb. The 36-45 category however was also highly represented within the sample (27%). 56% of respondents had used the Comb salons for over a year and 82% visited the salons more than 6 times a year and so brand experience can be assumed for a large percentage of the sample.

To retain consistency in the analysis process through out the case companies again survey results shall be interpreted in view of the hypotheses within this research, with the fifth hypothesis relating to the different forms of relationship strategy, considered primarily during cross case comparisons in chapter thirteen.

To begin, the first hypothesis stated that:

11.4.1. The quality of each type of relationship consumers may have with their brands.

- a. High overall BRQ scores will be found in the following relationship types which are ordered according to their expected strength;
 - committed partnership
 - dependency
 - childhood friend

- b. Medium overall BRQ scores will be found in the following relationship types which are ordered according to their expected strength;
 - courtship
 - flings
 - casual friendship

- c. Low overall BRQ scores will be found in the following relationship type;
 - enslavement

The measures used for this hypothesis were the metaphorical relationship type and Fournier's (1994 Brand Relationship Quality scale.

11.4.1.1. Relationship Type

Table 11.6 shows the distribution of relationship types within the sample. The most frequently perceived relationship was a 'casual friendship' and 'dependency' being the least common relationship.

Table 11.6 Which of the following types of personal relationship best describes your association with the brand?

Relationship Type	Percentage
	n=88
Casual friend	32
Committed partnership	14
Childhood friend	14
Other	8
Fling	8
Courtship	5
Enslavement	5
Dependency	2

The 8 verbatim comments from the 'other' category include:

1. Hairdresser
2. Customer/ client
3. Relationship with the stylist not the salon, if he moves so do I
4. Professional client relationship
5. Expertise of the staff
6. Business relationship
7. A good friend
8. Trusted friend who gives me confidence
9. An extremely dependable friendship

The first six of the verbatim comments can be associated with the respondent identifying a rational transactional exchange with a service provider. Here the relationship is considered purely on a professional basis. The remaining three verbatim comments all relate to positive forms of friendship that would exceed the casual friendship metaphor but do not meet the higher level of romantic partnership forms. Business relationships differ from interpersonal relationships as they develop in a more guarded manner (Hutt, 1995). Business relationships are a legitimate alternative form of the consumer-brand relationship but one which clearly has different characteristics to the relationships investigated within

this research. The thesis states that relationships with different characteristics will achieve different BRQ scores.

11.4.1.2. The BRQ

The composite mean for each of the BRQ facets were computed and are shown in Table 11.6. A seven point Likert scale was used where 1 = ‘strongly disagree’ and 7 = ‘strongly agree’. The individual facet means show that partner quality is the highest rating facet amongst respondents whilst, intimacy has the lowest score.

Table 11.6 Composite means for each BRQ facet

BRQ Facet	Mean	Std. Deviation
Partner quality	5.55	1.550
Love	3.99	2.909
Personal commitment	3.31	3.550
Passionate attachment	2.92	3.049
Nostalgic connection	2.91	2.346
Self concept connection	2.71	2.657
Intimacy	2.45	2.399

Respondents perceived the closeness of the relationship to be either too close, just right or not close enough . Table 11.7 shows that 96.6% of respondents felt that the closeness of the relationship was just right, even though perceived ‘intimacy’ is low. This was also found in the Brush case, and so, it could be that hair salon clients either do not want or, will not admit to a relationship which is very close.

Table 11.7 Relationship closeness

Perceived closeness n=115	Percentage
The relationship is too close	3.4
The relationship is just right	96.6
The relationship is not close enough	0

To test whether there is any difference in BRQ between the different relationship groups, descriptive statistics show that it is possible to rank relationships according to BRQ. The rank order of relationships in terms of mean BRQ can be seen in Table 11.8

Table 11.8 Mean score for each relationship type

Rank	Relationship	Mean BRQ	Expected relationship in rank
1	Dependency	35.0	Committed partnership – (high)
2	Committed partnership	34.21	Dependency (high)
3	Childhood friend	28.04	Childhood friend (high)
4	Courtship	22.18	Courtship (med)
5	Enslavement	23.16	Fling (med)
6	Casual friend	19.67	Casual friendship (med)
7	Fling	17.37	Enslavement (low)

The ‘other’ relationship category that was available for respondents to avoid forced compliance, generated a mean BRQ of 21.43.

To test for significance, One way ANOVA was used to test the null hypothesis that ‘there is no difference in the BRQ between relationship types’. Table 11.9 shows the test results.

Table 11.9 One way ANOVA - There is no difference in the BRQ between relationship types.

	Sum of squares	Degrees of freedom	Mean sum of squares	F ratio	Significance
Between group	2918	7	416.915	6.093	.000
Within group	5268	77	68.423		
Total	8186	84			

In this case, the within group variance is greater than the between group variance which means that the null hypothesis can be rejected. The ratio of explained to unexplained variance of 417/68 providing an F ratio of 6 is significant and there is a 0% chance of making a mistake by rejecting the null hypothesis. Post hoc analysis enabled closer investigation of which groups are significantly different from each other. The Least Significant Difference test showed where significant differences exist at the .05 level. Table 11.10 shows differences between groups.

Table 11.10 Post hoc analysis results

	Committed partnership	Courtship	Fling	Casual friend	Childhood friend	Dependency	Enslavement	Other
Committed partnership	-	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Courtship	✓	-						
Fling	✓		-		✓	✓		
Casual friend				-	✓	✓		
Childhood friend	✓		✓	✓	-			
Dependency			✓	✓		-		✓
Enslavement	✓						-	
Other	✓					✓		-

Key:

‘-’ = no significant difference

‘✓’ = significant difference identified at 0.5 level

The ranking of the relationships in terms of their hypothesised ranks is interesting as those expected to achieve high scores did achieve the highest scores. The ‘dependency’ BRQ mean however was un-expectantly higher than

‘committed partnerships’ as was found in the Brush case. The difference in ranking was however very small (35 compared to 34.2) and the result was not significant. For the higher rating relationships the BRQ was high as expected but the order of the ranked relationships was not as predicted. Where relationships were expected to score BRQ in the middle and low positions of the rank, unexpected findings occurred. Although ‘courtship’ and ‘casual friendship’ did achieve the predicted positions in the middle of the ranking, ‘fling’ (expected mid) and ‘enslavement’ (expected low) relationships were in reverse order. Due to the similarity in findings with the Brush case, these issues will be discussed further in chapter 13 when cross case comparisons are made.

To conclude the first hypothesis, it is evident that it can only be partially supported. This is because the as the rankings of BRQ for the mid and low positions in were not consistent with what was predicted. The overall structure where relationships were grouped according to whether they were expected to generate a high, medium or low BRQ was supported. The second hypothesis, which also considers the different forms of relationships, will now be discussed.

11.4.2. The effect of consumer personality on the likelihood to enter different types of relationship.

The second hypothesis stated that:

- a. Secure individuals will be more satisfied within and more likely to enter committed partnerships, courtships, childhood friendships and casual friendships.

- b. Anxious individuals will be more satisfied within and more likely to enter childhood friendships and dependent relationships.
- c. Avoidant individuals will be more satisfied within and more likely to enter flings and casual friendships

In order to test this hypothesis satisfaction , quality ,the relationship type and attachment style measures were applied.

11.4.2.1. Satisfaction and quality

With regard to satisfaction, Table 11.11 shows that Comb scores at the top end of all of the satisfaction scale dimensions.

Table 11.11 Mean satisfaction

n=88	Mean	Standard deviation
Satisfaction with contact persons	6.02	1.28
Satisfaction with the core service	6.07	1.14
Satisfaction with the salon	5.81	1.30
Overall satisfaction	5.89	1.33

Respondents' perceptions of the quality of Comb also generated a mean score within the top portion of the scale across all the dimensions. The scores can be seen in Table 11.12.

Table 11.12 Mean quality

n=88	Mean	Standard deviation
Quality of contact persons	6.18	1.06
Quality of the core service i.e. the style	6.09	1.08
Quality of the salon	5.92	1.07
Overall satisfaction	5.81	1.29

When tested for reliability, both the satisfaction and quality scales were shown to be reliable with alpha's calculated as .88 for the satisfaction scale and .70 for the quality scale. Pearson's correlation co-efficient (2-tailed) was used to assess the validity of the assumed association between composite satisfaction and quality. A coefficient of .704 was generated showing that satisfaction and quality are significantly correlated at the 0.01 level. Associations between satisfaction and quality are important within relationships and particularly within service industries (Eiriz, 1999).

11.4.2.2. Attachment style

Composite means were taken for scores on the attachment style measurement scale and respondents were grouped according to the attachment style they showed prevalence towards. Table 11.13 shows the distribution of attachment styles:

Table 11.13 Attachment style

Attachment style	Percentage
Secure	47
Anxious	24
Avoidant	11
No predominant disposition	6
Total respondents n=88	

As with the Brush case the distribution of respondents across the attachment styles differed to the expected norm as outlined by Simpson (1990). Simpson's work concentrated on romantic relationships but was considered reliable across all relationship forms. The expected distribution of 70% secure and the remaining 30% distributed among the insecure styles has clearly not occurred. More Comb respondents identified with the anxious characteristics than was expected. Anxious individuals demonstrate preoccupation with issues surrounding relationship partners predictability, dependability and trustworthiness. As the Brush case also showed a deviation from the normal distribution of attachment styles, why this occurred shall be further investigated within chapter 13.

The various characteristics of each attachment style were outlined in the theory development (chapter 5). This chapter explained why different relationships were expected to be preferred by particular attachment groups. The expected preferred relationships for each of the attachment groups are outlined in table 11.14.

Table 11.14 Attachment groups predicted preferred relationships

Attachment group	Expected relationship
Secure	Committed partnership Courtship Childhood friendship Casual friendship
Anxious	Childhood friendship Dependency
Avoidant	Flings Casual friendship

Chi square tests enabled an investigation of whether respondents enter the relationships they were predicted to enter versus those they were not expected to

enter according to their attachment style. The Chi square results are shown in Table 11.14.

Table 11.14 Chi square results

Attachment style	Prediction	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Secure total 46	Predicted relationships	37	23	14
	Unpredicted relationships	9	23	-14
Anxious total 24	Predicted relationships	2	12	-10
	Unpredicted relationships	22	12	10
Avoidant total 11	Predicted relationships	5	5.5	-.5
	Unpredicted relationships	6	5.5	.5

It can be seen from the Table 11.14 that secure individuals are more likely to enter predicted relationships rather than unpredicted relationships. Anxious individuals on the other hand show a strong tendency within the Comb case to enter relationships other than those they were expected to. This is interesting particularly as there are a greater number of anxious individuals in the sample than expected. A plausible explanation is that some of these respondents may not naturally be anxious but, would be projecting this image in their responses to deliberately appear aloof. Although there were only a few avoidant individuals within the sample (11), the sample is almost equally split between those who enter predicted relationships and those who enter unpredicted relationships.

Differences in satisfaction between those who enter predicted relationships and respondents who enter unexpected relationship types were explored with One-way ANOVA tests. Each of the three attachment groups was tested with a null

hypothesis which stated that ‘there is no difference between the satisfaction levels of those in the predicted relationships versus unexpected relationships’.

For secure individuals, the between-group variance (mean square) was greater than the within-group variance and if the null hypothesis is rejected, there is only a 5% chance of error. It is more likely with an F ratio of 4 and this significance level that the null hypothesis is wrong and should be rejected. The results are shown in Table 11.15.

Table 11.15 One way ANOVA - There is no difference in satisfaction between Secure respondents in predicted versus unpredicted relationship types

	Sum of squares	Degrees of freedom	Mean sum of squares	F ratio	Significance
Between group	4.584	1	4.584	3.905	0.54
Within group	51.655	44	1.174		
Total	56.239	45			

Table 11.15 shows that levels of satisfaction for secure respondents do differ between predicted and unexpected relationship types. Independent t-tests on satisfaction means indicate that the secure respondents who were within the predicted relationships types were more satisfied than those within unexpected relationships other than those predicted. Results from the T –test can be seen in Table 11.16.

Table 11.16 Independent t test results for Secure respondents

Avoidant respondents satisfaction	N	Mean	Standard deviation	Standard Mean Error
Respondents within predicted relationships	37	6.10	1.00	.16
Respondents within unexpected relationships	9	5.31	1.40	.47

Levene's test for Equality of Variances determines whether or not the two samples come from populations with similar variances (see Table 11.17 for results). In this case the significance level (.036) is less than the typical .05 and so the unequal variance estimate for the t-test is chosen. The t-test provides a significance level of 13.9% at the 95% confidence interval. As differences in satisfaction would occur 13.9% of the time by chance, it is not possible to reject the null hypothesis that for secure individuals there is no difference in mean satisfaction.

Table 11.17 Independent samples test for Secure respondents satisfaction

	Levene's test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of means		
	F	Significance	t	Degrees of freedom	Significance (two tailed)
Equal variances assumed	4.667	.036	1.976	44	.054
Equal variances not assumed			1.607	10.065	.139

When the same ANOVA tests are applied to anxious individuals, again, no differences in levels of satisfaction were found. The results in Table 11.18 demonstrate that even though the between-group variance was smaller than the within-group variance, there was a 48.5% risk of wrongly rejecting the null hypothesis. This means the null hypothesis could not be rejected. For anxious respondents, there is no difference in satisfaction no matter which form of relationship they have with Comb.

Table 11.18 One way ANOVA - There is no difference in satisfaction between Anxious respondents in predicted versus unpredicted relationship types

	Sum of squares	Degrees of freedom	Mean sum of squares	F ratio	Significance
Between group	.523	1	.523	.504	.485
Within group	22.849	22	1.039		
Total	23.372	23			

ANOVA tests for Avoidant individuals showed that there was greater between-group variance than within-group variance and in this case the null hypothesis is rejected there is only a 2% chance of making a mistake (Table 11.19). Differences between avoidant individuals' satisfaction requires further analysis though T-tests (Table 11.20).

Table 11.19 One way ANOVA - There is no difference in satisfaction between Avoidant respondents in predicted versus unpredicted relationship types

	Sum of squares	Degrees of freedom	Mean sum of squares	F ratio	Significance
Between group	7.576	1	7.576	7.719	.021
Within group	8.833	9	.981		
Total	16.409	10			

Independent T-tests show that there is a variation in mean satisfaction, the results can be seen in Table 11.20. Avoidant individuals in unpredicted relationships are more satisfied than those in predicted relationships.

Table 11.20 Independent t test results for Avoidant respondents

Avoidant respondents satisfaction	N	Mean	Standard deviation	Standard Mean Error
Respondents within predicted relationships	5	4.75	.83	.37
Respondents within unexpected relationships	6	6.42	1.10	.45

Again, Levene's Test for Equality of Variances is applied and a significance level of .644 is obtained (Table 11.21). The Equal variance estimate for the t-test provides a significance level of 2%. The null hypothesis can therefore be rejected because levels of satisfaction do differ. In the Comb case, avoidant individuals were actually more satisfied in they relationships they were not expected to enter.

Table 11.21 Independent samples test for Avoidant respondents satisfaction

	Levene's test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of means		
	F	Significance	t	Degrees of freedom	Significance (two tailed)
Equal variances assumed	.228	.644	-2.778	9	.021
Equal variances not assumed			-2.857	8.941	.019

Conclusions for hypothesis two within the Comb case are that the hypothesis can only be partially supported. Only secure individuals are more likely enter the relationship types they were expected to. In addition, they were more satisfied when in predicted relationships rather than alternative relationships. Anxious individuals were more likely to enter unexpected relationships and there was no difference in their level of satisfaction. Avoidant individuals were also more likely to enter unexpected relationships and were more satisfied within

unexpected relationships. The third hypothesis also measured attachment style, this time in relation to individuals' perceptions of brand personality.

11.4.3. The effect of consumer's attachment style on their brand preferences.

The third hypothesis stated that:

- a. Secure people will be highly satisfied with brands that rate highly in sincerity and competence traits.
- b. Anxious people will also be highly satisfied with brands that score highly on the sincerity trait .
- c. Avoidant people will be highly satisfied with brands that only have a low score in the sincerity trait.

The hypothesis was tested by combining the concepts of mean satisfaction, attachment style and brand personality.

To begin, mean scores for each of the brand personality facets were generated in order to see how customers perceived the Comb brand personality. The facet means can be seen in Table 11.21.

Table 11.21 Brand personality facet means

Brand personality facet	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Competence	88	4.90	1.10
Sincerity	88	4.49	1.08
Excitement	88	4.32	1.24
Sophistication	88	4.24	1.23
Ruggedness	88	2.51	1.31

Table 11.21 showed that all of the facets except ‘ruggedness’ (which has a very low score) are around the mid point of the scale. None of the facets achieved the ‘highly descriptive’ score of 7. Standard deviations are also consistently around 1 S.D. One-way ANOVA tests were used to establish whether different attachment groups perceive the brand personality facet differently.

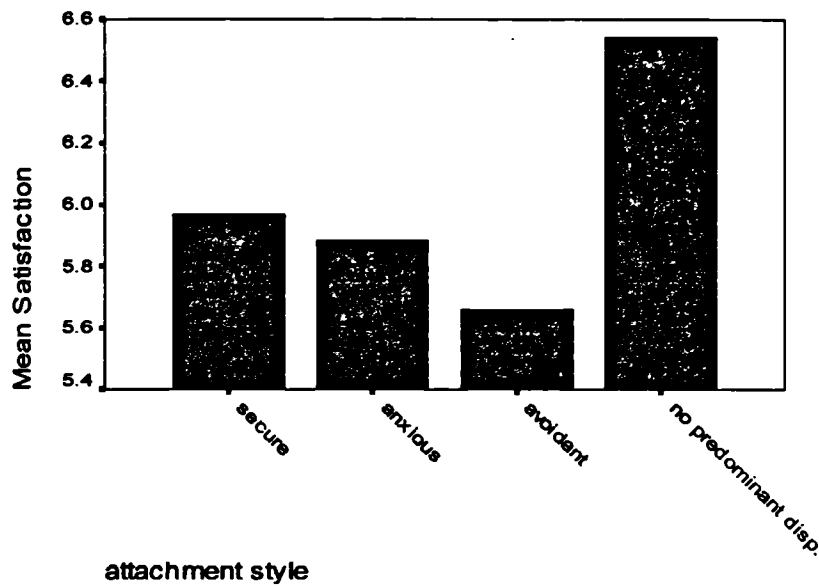
Table 11.22. ANOVA – HO There is no difference in different attachment groups mean scores for each of the brand personality types

Brand personality facet		Sum of squares	Degrees of freedom	Mean square	F	Significance
Competence mean	Within group	2.457	3	.819	.668	.574
	Between group	101.810	83	1.227		
	Total	104.267	86			
Ruggedness mean	Within group	14.562	3	4.854	3.00	.035
	Between group	135.751	84	1.616		
	Total	150.313	87			
Sophistication mean	Within group	4.074	3	1.358	.889	.450
	Between group	126.734	83	1.527		
	Total	130.808	86			
Excitement mean	Within group	2.457	3	.819	.668	.574
	Between group	101.810	83	1.227		
	Total	104.267	86			
Sincerity mean	Within group	9.736	3	3.245	3.0	.035
	Between group	89.777	83	1.082		
	Total	99.513	86			

For sincerity and ruggedness brand personality traits, significance levels indicate that there is a low risk of rejecting the null hypothesis that there is no difference. For all the other traits it is not possible to reject the null hypothesis. Post hoc analysis using the Least-significant difference test indicates that differences arise for both the sincerity and ruggedness traits between secure individuals and those with no predominant disposition and between anxious individuals and again those with no predominant disposition. No difference was found between the three attachment styles accounted for within the hypothesis.

Mean satisfaction comparisons between attachment styles can be seen in figure 11.1.

Figure 11.1



The graph shows that individuals with no predominant attachment style are more satisfied than those with distinctive attachment styles.

Conclusions for hypothesis three are that in the Comb case the hypothesis can not be supported as there is no difference in the satisfaction levels or perceived brand personality between different attachment groups. It is interesting to note for future research and further consideration within the cross case comparison chapter, that individuals with no predominant attachment style differ in their brand perception and satisfaction.

The fourth hypothesis moved attachment style into the context of customers' opinions of relationship marketing strategies.

11.4.4. The effect of consumer's attachment style on the response to the form of relationship marketing.

The fourth hypothesis stated that:

- a. Secure consumers will be best served and most satisfied within a relational strategy where customer-partnering strategies are incorporated.
- b. Anxious consumers will be best served and most satisfied within a relational approach but only when companies are in a position to keep promises and to maximise trust and provide the level of closeness required by the consumer.
- c. Avoidant subjects will be best served and most satisfied through a transactional approach as relationship approaches will lead to alienation.

To test the fourth hypothesis mean satisfaction and attachment style were applied again. In addition a measure of the customers perception of closeness and a consideration of various forms of relationship marketing were used. The perception of whether or not particular relationship strategies were used by Comb along with a general measurement of respondents views of relationship marketing practices were used to analyse this hypothesis.

Analysis of hypothesis three showed that there is no difference in the satisfaction levels of the three attachment groups. By looking at the perception of closeness Table 11.23, it can be seen that 96.6% of respondents thought that the closeness

of the relationship was just right. An early indication that the hypothesis may not be supported comes from the lack of difference in satisfaction between attachment groups. In addition, the majority of respondents (96.6%) are satisfied with the closeness of the relationship. Within the sample a large proportion of respondents were identified as anxious, these respondents were expected to regard the relationship as not close enough.

Table 11.23 Perceived relationship closeness

Perceived closeness n=88	Percentage
The relationship is too close	3.4
The relationship is just right	96.6
The relationship is not close enough	0

For the hypothesis to be supported anxious individuals would have stated that the relationship is not close enough. This observation is magnified when it is considered that there were a greater than expected number of anxious individuals within the sample. Table 11.24 shows that no individual classified the relationship as not close enough and the majority within each attachment group perceived the relationship to be just right. Secure individuals unanimously stated that the relationship was 'just right' whilst unexpectedly, 8% of anxious individuals considered the relationship to be 'too close'.

Table 11.24 Perceived relationship closeness split out by attachment style

Attachment style	Perceived relationship closeness	Percentage
Secure (n=47)	Too close	0
	Just right	100
	Not close enough	0
Anxious (n=24)	Too close	8.3
	Just right	91.7
	Not close enough	0
Avoidant (n=11)	Too close	9.1
	Just right	90.9
	Not close enough	0
No predominant disposition (n=6)	Too close	0
	Just right	100
	Not close enough	0

Throughout the qualitative phase of research Comb was shown to focus on brand level relationships with the use of a database of details enabling customers to be reminded of their visit. As with all hairdressing services, relationships will develop between the stylist and client and so it could be fair to say that for long standing clients relationships there is a greater tendency for relationships rather than transactional approaches to marketing to develop.

Respondents were questioned regarding their perception of different relationship building strategies and were asked to indicate whether Comb operated any of these strategies and if so whether they as clients of Comb had any experience of these marketing tools.

Table 11.25 Relationship marketing strategies operated by Comb

Strategy	Yes %	No %	Don't know %	Experienced % (% of those who thought 'yes')		
				Y	N	DK
Frequent visitor programme	9	16	75	62.5	37.5	-
Company newsletters and updates	7	21	73	33.3	66.7	-
Corporate Magazines	10	16	74	22.2	77.8	-
Customer care training for staff	33	8	59	20.7	62.1	17.2
Open communications with customers	64	6	31	58.9	26.8	14.3
Database of customer details	61	10	28	66.7	18.5	14.8
Service personalised for the customer	50	8	42	59.1	22.7	18.2
Additional services for key customers	15	16	69	38.5	38.5	23.1
Mailings and promotions sent to customers	15	26	59	46.2	46.2	7.7
Special events cards/ gifts	19	20	60	58.2	29.4	11.8
Partnerships with other companies to provide additional services for customers	8	16	76	28.6	57.1	14.3

The strategies most highly recognised as being used by Comb were Open Communications with customers (64%), database of customer details (61%), service personalised for the customer (50%) and customer care training for staff (33%). Of those who thought that Comb operated these strategies high percentages of these respondents considered themselves to have experienced or been involved with communications with customers (58.9%), database of

customer details (66.7%), service personalised for the customer (59.1%). Involvement with customer care training for staff was not participated in by a very high percentage of respondents (20.7%).

When asked how they felt about the use of various relationship strategies in general via the 7 point scale where 1= strongly disapprove and 7= strongly approve, the mean score for each attachment group was above the mid point (score 4) of the scale for all strategies. The means can be seen in Table 11.26.

Table 11.26 Attachment group views of relationship marketing strategies

Strategy	Secure mean	Anxious mean	Avoidant mean	No disp. mean
Frequent visitor programme	4.85	4.71	4.64	4.17
Company newsletters and updates	4.49	4.88	4.36	4.67
Corporate Magazines	4.19	4.58	4.91	4.67
Customer care training for staff	6.30	6.17	6.45	6.17
Open communications with customers	6.06	6.25	6.64	6.00
Database of customer details	5.83	5.42	6.00	5.50
Service personalised for the customer	6.11	5.83	6.55	6.33
Additional services for key customers	5.66	5.79	5.73	5.17
Mailings and promotions sent to customers	4.47	4.96	5.73	5.00
Special events cards/ gifts	5.23	5.04	5.36	4.00
Partnerships with other companies to provide additional services for customers	4.60	4.96	4.45	5.17

One way ANOVA and post hoc analysis showed that there are no significant differences at the .05 level attachment groups with regard to relationship strategies.

To summarise hypothesis four, this hypothesis cannot be supported within the Comb case. This is because all attachment groups were satisfied and there is no significant difference in their agreement with regard to different levels of relationship strategies.

The fifth hypothesis continued with an evaluation of the relationship marketing strategy.

11.4.5. The effect of the style of relationship marketing strategy on the quality of the consumer – brand relationship.

The fifth hypothesis stated that;

- a. 'Lower level' database relationship marketing strategies involving one way intelligence gathering will lead to a low BRQ and the only relationship likely to develop under such circumstances would be 'enslavement' relationships.
- b. Customer partnering with truly dyadic two-way relationship building strategies leads to high a BRQ and positive relationships.
- c. Frequent, tangible people based interactions lead to strong BRQ but the relationship potentially exists between the consumer and the employees rather than with the brand
- d. Infrequent non face to face to intangible based interaction weakens the BRQ but the relationship is more likely to be with the brand.

It is not possible to analyse all parts of hypothesis five within the Comb case for the same reason's as it wasn't possible in the Brush case. Once all three case studies are compared in chapter thirteen, it will be possible to consider the complete hypothesis. The level of relationship marketing has already been identified as being a two-way, customer-partnering strategy. This means that part B of the hypothesis is relevant for Comb because it have been identified as a higher level relationship strategy. Like Brush, the nature of the service means that frequent, face to face interactions are represented within the Comb case and so part C is also relevant.

For Part B, hypothesis one showed that Comb achieved high BRQ scores. Combined with the identification of a higher level relationship marketing strategy, the hypothesis which states that higher level relationship building strategies lead to strong BRQ scores..

Part C considers whether or not the relationship is perceived by customers to be with the staff or the brand. On a seven point scale where: 1 represented the brand and 7 represented staff; the mean score was 6.06. This score highlights the staff as being the dominant focus of customer relationships. This finding indicates that part c of the hypothesis can be supported. The service can be described as frequent, tangible and people based and, the relationship is perceived to be with the staff rather than the brand.

11.5. CONCLUSION

To summarise the extent to which each of the hypotheses were supported within the Comb case Table 11.27 provides an outline.

Table 11.27 Summary of support for hypotheses.

Summary of hypothesis	Supported ?
H1- The quality of each type of relationship consumers may have with their brands is dependent on the type of relationship between the parties.	Part a supported
H2 –Attachment style determines levels of satisfaction within and the types of relationships sought.	Part a supported
H3 – Attachment style influences consumers' preferences for brands with particular personalities.	Not supported
H4- Attachment style will influence consumers' opinions towards different relationship marketing strategies.	Not supported
H5- Different forms of relationship marketing strategy will affect the brand relationship quality.	Testable parts B and C were supported

It was only possible within the Comb case to support part a, of the first hypothesis. This was because only committed partnerships, dependencies and childhood friendships had BRQ scores which could be ranked in their expected order. Although the other relationships could be categorised into their predicted medium or low BRQ score groups, ordering within these groups was not consistent with the hypothesis.

With regard to attachment style, the only support that was found for any of the hypotheses concerned secure respondents. Secure respondents were found to be

more likely to enter the types of relationships they were expected to and they were more satisfied within these relationships than if they entered alternative relationships. No other propositions specific to attachment style were supported. The higher level relationship marketing strategy being operated by Comb did coincide with a strong BRQ. Also, the frequent, tangible, people-based interactions did result in a stronger staff relationship, rather than brand relationship with customers.

CHAPTER TWELVE

WINGS CASE FINDINGS

12.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the findings from the Wing case. As with the previous two cases, the chapter begins with the qualitative research. The two phases of qualitative research are covered. Findings from the interviews with key company informants. This section is broken down into the brand components identified within the consumer-brand relationship model. The model relies on the consideration of contextual factors when trying to understand the nature of the brand relationship. It is for this reason that an overview of Wing is also provided.

Following the findings from interviews, the staff survey findings are reviewed. These findings provide additional contextual insight and clarify the perceptions of front line staff who are likely to influence service brand relationships.

The qualitative phase indicates that Wing projected a confused brand message which has implications for the way consumers may enter relationships. The quantitative customer survey is covered last.

Within the quantitative survey, only limited support was found for the hypotheses. As with the previous two cases, each hypothesis will be taken in turn and the findings discussed.

12.2 QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW FINDINGS

Interviews with key Wing informants provided information about the brand side of the theoretical model. The interview protocol, details of the sample, respondents and analysis procedures were discussed in chapter seven (sections 7.2. and 7.5.) To begin discussions of the case findings, an overview of Wing first provides some context to the case story.

12.2.1 Wing Overview

Wing is a newly created airline following the merger of two well established airline brands. Although UK based and operated semi-autonomously Wing has a parent airline Fly, which directs some marketing activity. Wing's strategy perceived as a 'low cost, no frills' airline but neither is it a premium carrier. Similarities do exist with the lower cost end of the market; there is only one class for example. Yet, it also has similarities with the premium carriers. The airline is part of one of the most powerful airline network alliances providing a global coverage. Overall, Wing can be described as a 'hybrid' airline being neither low cost not premium operating somewhere in the middle ground. Some would argue that the airline is 'stuck in the middle' (Porter, 1980).

12.2.2 Organisational Culture and Strategy

Several elements of Fly's (the parent airline) culture are evident within Wing. This finding is not unusual particularly in a pan-European merger where management styles differ (Johnson and Scholes, 1993). Joint marketing initiatives and the dominance of Fly staff within Wing have contributed to this merging of cultures one respondent mentioned;

“There is always talk of us as Fly-ers and there is almost a language unique to Fly which has become inherent in the Wing culture” (Network director).

Another respondent said:

“when you hear anyone talking about us it’s always Fly and even internally its Fly when they mean Wing and so the cultures do merge” (Senior product development manager)

The prevailing culture was described as consensus driven, as summarised by one respondent:

“we are consensus driven, when you make a decision everyone gets on board and then you go with it and if someone isn’t on board you don’t it’s a very Fly thing” (Marketing Manager)

As part of this consensus driven culture management roles are viewed as co-ordinating rather than being dominant and this is also reflected in a customer service recovery programme. Empowering staff to be able to deal with any customer problems at the time they occur is consistent with the culture.

Implications for relationships are that consumers may perceive a bad service encounter less negatively in view of their future relationship with the airline. This is because immediate efforts were made to correct the problem swiftly (Bolton, 1998).

Linked to the concept of organisational strategy are the concepts of brand strategy and positioning. Within the Wing case the brand and organisational strategy were terms used interchangeably.

12.2.3 Brand Strategy and Positioning

The influence of Fly is also evident with regard to brand strategy and positioning where there is a confused brand message within Wings and amongst customers:

“customers find it quite confusing and don’t see Wing as a brand in it’s own right” (product manager)

The following quotes are good examples of this commonly held view:

“I don’t think that we’ve been very successful in separating Wing and Fly, we need to separate them to be clear about our positioning which hasn’t been particularly clear”(senior product manager)

“our positioning is not clear to the customer and I think that it is confusing them as they don’t see us as one airline or one thing or another, we are just there”
(marketing executive)

The strategic decision to position the airline in the middle of the market was to fill a market gap not filled by low cost or premium carriers. Airports that Wing flies into further exacerbate the confused positioning. Within the worldwide airline industry, regional airports are most frequently used by the lower cost airlines and premium carriers use the major international airports. Wing uses both regional airports (to offer convenience) yet, it also uses major airports (in order to provide a global service). This results in users of low cost airlines believing that Wing is expensive and those who use premium carriers, particularly business class passengers, thinking that Wing cannot achieve their desired levels of quality and comfort. The relationship specific question that

should be raised in light is; what remaining groups of customers would want to enter a relationship with Wing? One explanation is that passengers may choose to fly with Wing because of its brand values and personality.

12.2.4 Brand Personality

Wing had invested substantial resources into understanding and promoting its brand personality. The characteristics and brand values were widely reported as being young, friendly, caring, pragmatic, conventional, innovative, affordable and fresh. The following quote illustrates one respondent's perception:

“ these (brand personality characteristics) are set against the obvious backdrop that you are a scheduled airline, which isn't exactly the youngest, friendliest, most innovative product around, those are brand aspirations as much as anything else” (marketing manager).

This quote raises the question whether the brand personality identified by respondents is a well-known aspiration rather than, a true reflection of the actual personality.

Brand personality was recognised by everyone interviewed as being reflected in all marketing messages and staff outlook and behaviour.

Interviewees were given Aaker's brand personality measurement scale in order for comparisons between staff and customers perceptions to be made.

Items that were scored highly by the respondents were:

- Sincerity facet – friendly, down to earth, honest, sincere
- Excitement facet -spirited
- Competence facet –hardworking, reliable
- Sophistication facet – no facets scored highly
- Ruggedness – masculine, outdoorsy

The facets identified by informants through the personality measurement scale match the freely offered characteristics talked about during interviews. This observation indicates that even though the positioning of the brand was not clear, those responsible for managing the brand perceived an unambiguous brand personality. One respondent however, stated that the quoted brand personality might be an aspiration rather than reality. Whether passengers also perceive brand personality in the same way as Wing employees may depend to a certain extent on the history the consumer shares with the brand in terms of an existing relationship (Schultz and Kitchen, 2000).

12.2.5 Relationship

Relationship building within the airline industry has traditionally centred on frequent flyer programmes. Wing has a programme that it operates in conjunction with Fly and a number of network partner airlines. Scepticism amongst Wings marketing staff exists regarding the long -term relationship building properties of such programmes. One respondent stated:

“I’m really sceptical, I don’t think people fly networks or loyalty programmes, I think they fly Wing because they fly A to B in the quickest time and cheapest option , in my view people fly from their local airport” (marketing executive)

The dominant perception was that relationships were developed because of good service, convenience and the service recovery programme. The programme was viewed as integral to a relationship building philosophy. Empowering staff to compensate for disruption such as flight delays on the spot by providing added extras to diffuse the situation was considered most important for relationship building and PR. An internet forum was also operated by Wing to act as a direct link with the brand. Not everyone interviewed viewed the forum as important for building relationships some respondents viewed it as a means for customer timewasters. Relationship marketing theory would support a different view as opening opportunities for communication is thought to be a positive relationship enhancing technique (Bennett, 1996). Senior marketers who had been encouraged to view the forum daily admitted they rarely entered the site because it always held messages from the same customers who consistently 'moaned'. Jones and Sasser's (1995) typology of customers would categorise these customers as potential 'terrorists' or 'hostages'. Attention should be paid to these individuals so they do not damage relationships between the brand and other customers. Another danger is that these customers' actions could also diminish staff morale.

Overall, despite the use of a service recovery programme, Wing cannot be described as using any relationship marketing strategies apart from database marketing. This is because intimacy was not valued and there was no desire to build relationships that involved any form of customer integration.

Once senior marketers were interviewed, key themes were identified and the perceptions of front line staff could be measured.

12.3 STAFF SURVEY FINDINGS

The staff survey was used to gather data relating to the perception of team members towards the Wing brand and relationships with customers. Research design issues were covered within chapter seven (in section 7.3) so will not be discussed in this chapter. Following content analysis, each of the topics identified can be seen in the tables throughout this section of the chapter. Each table covers a specific survey question. The first topic area relates to the staffs perception of the brand.

12.3.1 Perception of Wing Brand

The perception of the Wing brand was measured through Aaker's (1994) brand personality measurement scale.

The brand personality facets rated highly by respondents can be seen as bullet points below.

- sincerity facet – friendly
- excitement facet – spirited
- competence facet – reliable, leader
- sophistication facet – none
- ruggedness - none

These facets match those identified by the senior personnel interviewed. In terms of brand strategy, this finding is important for the brand's relationship with consumers. If brand personality was not viewed consistently internally, it is unlikely that it would be perceived as intended externally by customers.

Team members were also asked the questions:

“What do you think makes Wing airline different to other airlines?”

and;

“What efforts are made by the airline to convey these differences to the customer?”

The perception of the brand again closely matched that found within the interviews with senior marketing staff. When asked what made Wing different to other airlines the main reason given was friendly and helpful staff (Table 12.1). These issues were also raised within interviews with key informants. The issues are also reflected in the decision to further empower staff through the service recovery program.

Table 12.1 Perception of brand differentiation.

What do you think makes a Wing airline different to other airlines?	
Code	Number of respondents stating
Friendly and helpful staff	9
Convenience	6
Training for staff	5
Value	2

The efforts made to convey differences were attributed to teamwork, airline image and service recovery and the capabilities of staff.

Table 12.2 Perceived differentiation

What efforts are made by the airline to convey these differences to the customer?	
Code	Number of respondents stating
Teamwork	7
Airline image	5
Service recovery programme	4
Training of staff	3
Friendliness of staff	1

The service recovery programme was again highlighted as a central theme. This

could be because it had been launched just prior to the research fieldwork and so was in the forefront of respondents' minds. Heightened awareness of the programme is likely as a high profile internal launch was used. Staff were told at the time of the launch that the programme would help build stronger customer relationships.

12.3.2 The Relationship with Customers

When asked whether the relationship was with the brand or the staff, respondents identified that the relationship was with the brand. The main justification given was that there was generally no time during flights to build a relationship with passengers. Table 12.3 shows the result.

Table 12.3 Relationship with the brand or staff

Please explain why you think the relationship is with the brand or the staff.	
Code	Number of respondents stating
relationship with the brand	13

With regard to strategies used to build relationships with customers, respondents were asked to comment on company level initiatives and their personal role. Significantly, most respondents viewed the frequent flyer programme as being responsible for building relationships with customers. This view contradicts the views of senior marketers who had expressed doubts about the ability of such initiatives to build relationships. One possible explanation is that frequently flyer programmes along with other loyalty schemes are widely publicised to non-marketers as relationship marketing practices. As a result, these schemes may represent the 'layman's' view of relationship marketing. Table 12.4 shows the coded findings.

Table 12.4 Company level RM initiatives

What initiatives are taken at a company level to build relationships with customers?	
Code	Number of respondents stating
Frequent flyer programme	11
Public relations	2
Partnerships with other airlines	3

The personal role respondents played in building relationships was strongly considered to be due to positive interactions with passengers as Table 12.5 shows.

Table 12.5 Staff role in relationship building

What is your personal role in building relationships with customers and how do you attempt to do this?	
Code	Number of respondents stating
Politeness	6
Friendly approach	5
Ability to deal with problems	5
Efficiency	3

Overall, several areas identified within the interviews with key Wing informants were confirmed by front line staff. These included the importance of superior ‘customer care’ and ensuring service levels are maintained. Views such as these may have been reinforced through training packages. Differences in senior marketers and front line staff’s perceptions can be seen with regard to the use of frequent flyer programmes. Also, the confused brand positioning and message, which was a key finding from the interviews, was not reflected within the staff survey. This could be because it is not necessarily a concern for customer facing staff in their job roles. The impact of any confused brand message may on the other hand be reflected in the findings from the consumer survey which can now be examined.

12.4 QUANTITATIVE CUSTOMER SURVEY FINDINGS

The methodology and sample characteristics have been dealt with previously in chapters seven, nine and ten and so will not be discussed in detail within this chapter. The scheduled airline industry has two customer segments, business and leisure travellers which are not mutually exclusive. During the qualitative interviews it became apparent that both segments were important to Wing. Within the sample on the occasion they completed the survey 40.4% of respondents were flying for business purposes, 51% for leisure, 6.7% for combined business and leisure and 1.5% indicated other reasons. The distribution shows that both segments were well represented within the sample. With business travel, one concern had been that respondents might not have freely decided for themselves to use the particular case airline. Within this sample however, 64% of those stating business to be the sole purpose of their journey stated that they personally chose to use Wings.

To retain consistency in the analysis throughout the case companies again survey results shall be interpreted in view of the hypotheses within this research, with the fifth hypothesis relating to the different forms of relationship strategy, considered during cross case comparisons.

12.4.1 The quality of each type of relationship consumers may have with their brands.

The first hypothesis stated:

- a. High overall BRQ scores will be found in the following relationship types which are ordered according to their expected strength;
 - committed partnership
 - dependency
 - childhood friend

- b. Medium overall BRQ scores will be found in the following relationship types which are ordered according to their expected strength;
 - courtship
 - flings
 - casual friendship

- c. Low overall BRQ scores will be found in the following relationship type;
 - enslavement

The hypothesis was tested by identifying the metaphorical relationship type and by applying Fournier's (1994) Brand Relationship Quality scale.

12.4.1.1 Relationship Type

The first stage in testing hypothesis one was to identify the relationships that customers perceived. Table 12.6 shows the distribution of relationship types within the Wing sample. The most frequently perceived relationship was a

‘casual friendship’ while there were no ‘dependency’ relationships identified.

This is an interesting finding particularly as quite often within the airline industry due to timetable and route limitations passengers may be dependent on one particular airline. When questioned about their ability to choose the airline only 50% of respondents stated that they personally made a conscious decision to use Wing. In addition, 20.2% saying someone else decided and 29.8% that there was no choice. Among those who said there was no choice in the airline ‘enslavement’ relationships were expected to be the dominant relationship type.

Table 12.6 Which of the following types of personal relationship best describes your association with the brand?

Relationship Type	Percentage (All respondents) n=104	Percentage (Respondents who <u>didn't</u> choose Wing) n=52
Casual friend	32.7	34.6
Other	19.2	23.1
Courtship	11.5	9.6
Fling	10.6	9.6
Committed partnership	9.6	1.9
Enslavement	9.6	13.5
Childhood friend	6.7	7.7

The respondents who did not have a choice in the airline, were more inclined to perceive the relationship as an enslavement (13.5%) compared to those who did make a decision to use Wing (5.8%) the sample as a whole (9.6%). The perception of the relationship being a ‘casual friendship’ was however the most dominant view both within the whole sample and with those who did not have a choice of airline.

A proportion (19%) of respondents identified ‘other’ forms of relationships. The 20 verbatim comments from the ‘other’ category were described as a

business relationship by 18 respondents. The remaining two verbatim comments referred to the relationship as ‘Wing is an enemy’ whilst the other stated it was an airline and passenger relationship. Of the 20 respondents who classified an ‘other’ relationship 13 usually flew due to business, 5 flew for leisure purposes and 2 indicated both reasons for flying. A business relationship is a valid relationship type identification for business passengers and may take on different relationship characteristics than those identified as being interpersonal in nature. Although business relationships were not included within the seven interpersonal relationships chosen for testing, they are perfectly legitimate as brand level relationships. All three case studies have had business relationships, but within the Wing case as many passengers fly for business purposes, they are more likely to genuinely have a true business relationship with the brand. Business relationships take longer to become intimate (Hutt, 1994) if they ever do and so these will have implications for BRQ.

12.4.1.2 The BRQ

The composite mean for each of the BRQ facets were computed. A seven point Likert scale was used where 1 = ‘strongly disagree’ and 7 = ‘strongly agree’.

The individual facet means show that partner quality is the highest rating facet amongst respondents whilst self concept connection has the lowest score.

Table 12.7 Composite means for each BRQ facet.

BRQ Facet	Mean	Std. Deviation
Partner quality	3.93	1.98
Nostalgic connection	3.13	2.57
Love	2.89	1.86
Intimacy	2.65	2.59
Personal commitment	2.33	2.04
Passionate attachment	2.20	1.29
Self concept connection	1.94	1.16

Mean scores for the BRQ facets were all below the mid point of the 7 point scale except for the partner quality facet which just exceeds the mid point when the figure is rounded. This observation provides an early indication that the relationship between the brand and passengers does possess the characteristics to achieve a high relationship quality status. The closeness of the relationship however was perceived to be 'just right' by 70% of respondents rather than 'too close' (7%) or 'not close enough' (22%). As found within the other case companies for the hair salon industry, it may be that customers deliberately keep service providers 'at arms length' and so do not want to form closer relationships than they regard as necessary.

Any difference in BRQ between the different relationship groups is brought to light by descriptive statistics. The rank order for relationships in terms of mean BRQ can be seen in the Table 12.8:

Table 12.8 Mean BRQ score for each relationship type

Rank	Relationship	Mean BRQ	Expected relationship in rank
1	Committed partnership	29.05	Committed partnership – (high)
2	Courtship	22.65	Dependency (high)
3	Childhood friend	22.61	Childhood friend (high)
4	Casual friend	17.97	Courtship (med)
5	Enslavement	16.67	Fling (med)
6	Fling	14.93	Casual friendship (med)
7	Other	16.29	Enslavement (low)

To test for significance, one way ANOVA was used to test the null hypothesis that there is no difference in the BRQ between relationship types. Table 12.9 shows the results from the test.

Table 12.9 One way ANOVA –There is no difference in the BRQ between relationship types.

	Sum of squares	Degrees of freedom	Mean sum of squares	F ratio	Significance
Between group	1660.517	6	276.753	6.450	.000
Within group	4076.461	95	42.910		
Total	5736.979	101			

In this case the within group variance is greater than the between group variance which means that the null hypothesis that there is no difference between groups can be rejected. The ratio of explained to unexplained variance of 277/43 providing an F ratio of 6.45 is significant and there is a 0% chance of making a mistake by rejecting the null hypothesis. Post hoc analysis using the Least Significant Difference test showed where significant differences exist at the .05 level. Table 12.10 below shows differences between groups.

Table 12.10 Post hoc analysis results

	Committed partnership	Courtship	Fling	Casual friend	Childhood friend	Dependency	Enslavement	Other
Committed partnership	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓
Courtship	✓	-	✓	✓		-	✓	✓
Fling	✓	✓	-		✓	-		
Casual friend	✓	✓		-		-		
Childhood friend	✓		✓		-	-		✓
Dependency	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Enslavement	✓	✓				-	-	
Other	✓	✓				-		-

Key:

‘-’ = no significant difference

‘✓’ = significant difference identified at 0.5 level

The ranking of the relationships in terms of their hypothesised ranks did not occur as expected. The only relationship type which achieved its expected

rank was 'committed partnership'. For the other higher rating relationships dependency relationships were not identified and so can not be tested for within the Wing case. Childhood friendship was ranked marginally below courtships which were expected to achieve a mid rank. The marginal difference was not found to be significant during post hoc ANOVA tests and so it is difficult to state whether childhood friend has achieved a high status or a medium status. Fling relationships were expected to be ranked at a mid point and there was found to be significant differences between flings and childhood friendships and courtships as well differences between committed relationships and those ranking below it. In addition enslavement relationships were ranked above flings. Because the pattern of ranks does not equate with the expected ranks, the hypothesis cannot be supported within the Wing case.

The analysis of the second hypothesis which considers customers' attachment styles in relation to their preferences for different relationships can now be considered.

12.4.2 The effect of consumer personality on the likelihood to enter different types of relationship.

The second hypothesis stated that:

- a. Secure individuals will be more satisfied within and more likely to enter committed partnerships, courtships, childhood friendships and casual friendships.
- b. Anxious individuals will be more satisfied within and more likely to enter childhood friendships and dependent relationships.

- c. Avoidant individuals will be more satisfied within and more likely to enter flings and casual friendships

In order to test this hypothesis, the constructs satisfaction, quality, relationship type and attachment style were used within measurement instruments. Satisfaction and quality measures are included in the analysis because they are important to the brand relationship.

12.4.2.1 Satisfaction and quality

Table 12.11 shows the satisfaction of respondents across all four dimensions of the satisfaction scale with Wing. Scores for each dimension were greater than 3.5, therefore respondents can be described as satisfied.

Table 12.11 Mean satisfaction

n=104	Mean	Standard deviation
Satisfaction with contact persons	4.66	1.59
Satisfaction with the core service	4.61	1.59
Satisfaction with the airline	4.50	1.56
Overall satisfaction	4.67	1.51

Respondents' perception of the quality of Wing also provides a rounded mean score of 5 across all the dimensions. Results can be seen in Table 12.12.

Table 12.12 Mean quality

n=104	Mean	Standard deviation
Quality of contact persons	5.05	1.35
Quality of the core service i.e. the flight	4.93	1.47
Quality of the airline	4.82	1.41
Overall satisfaction	4.90	1.35

When tested for reliability, both the satisfaction and quality scales were shown to

be reliable with alpha's calculated as .9297 for the satisfaction scale and .8952 for the quality scale. Pearson's correlation co-efficient (2-tailed) was used to assess the validity of the assumed association between composite satisfaction and quality. A coefficient of .9463 was generated showing that satisfaction and quality are significantly correlated at the 0.01 level.

As both satisfaction and quality were scored within the top end of the scale, there is no reason to suggest they will have a detrimental impact on the relationship.

12.4.2.2 Attachment style

Composite mean scores for the attachment style measurement scale and respondents were grouped according to the attachment style respondents showed prevalence towards. Table 12.13 shows the distribution of attachment styles:

Table 12.13 Attachment style

Attachment style	Percentage
Secure	58.7
Anxious	25.0
Avoidant	9.6
No predominant disposition	6.7
Total respondents n=104	

The distribution of respondents across the attachment styles has differed to the expected norm as outlined by Simpson (1990). The normal distribution according to Simpson (1990) stated that 70% of respondents will be secure and the remaining 30% will be distributed between the insecure styles. The Wing case respondents' attachment styles are closer to the expected distributions than found in Brush or Comb. However, a greater than expected proportion of Wing respondents are classed as anxious. Anxious individuals demonstrate a preoccupation with issues surrounding relationship partner's predictability, dependability and trustworthiness.

Due to differences in the characteristics of each attachment style we expect different relationships are expected to be preferred by particular attachment groups. To re-cap, these preferences are outlined in Table 12.14.

Table 12.14 Attachment group preferred relationship predictions

Attachment group	Expected relationship
Secure	Committed partnership Courtship Childhood friendship Casual friendship
Anxious	Childhood friendship Dependency
Avoidant	Flings Casual friendship

Chi square tests were used to investigate whether based on their attachment style, respondents enter the relationships they were predicted to enter or those they were not expected to enter. The Chi square results are shown in table 12.15 :

Table 12.15 Chi square results

Attachment style	Prediction	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Secure total 49	Predicted relationships	37	24.5	12.5
	Unpredicted relationships	12	24.5	-12.5
Anxious total 28	Predicted relationships	4	14.0	-10.0
	Unpredicted relationships	24	14.0	10.0
Avoidant total 7	Predicted relationships	2	3.5	-1.5
	Unpredicted relationships	5	3.5	1.5

The chi square tests show that secure individuals demonstrate a tendency to enter the relationships they were predicted to enter whilst anxious and avoidant individuals are more likely to enter relationships other than those expected.

One-way ANOVA enables investigations into whether or not there is any difference in the level of satisfaction between those who enter 'predicted relationships' as opposed to those in relationships not predicted. The null hypothesis used for the three attachment groups states; 'there is no difference between the satisfaction levels of those in the predicted groups versus the unexpected groups for each of the three attachment groups'.

One-way ANOVA results for secure respondents showed the between-group variance (mean square) is greater than the within-group variance and if the null hypothesis is rejected there is no chance of error (0% significance). It is more likely with this level of significance and an F ratio of 28 that the null hypothesis is wrong and should be rejected. Table 12.16 shows the ANOVA results.

Table 12.16 One way ANOVA HO= There is no difference in satisfaction between Secure respondents in predicted versus unexpected relationship types

	Sum of squares	Degrees of freedom	Mean sum of squares	F ratio	Significance
Between group	43.762	1	43.762	28.141	.000
Within group	73.090	47	1.555		
Total	116.852	48			

Secure respondents were found to vary in their satisfaction according to whether they are within predicted or not predicted relationship with Wing. Independent t-tests on satisfaction means indicated that the 'secure respondents who entered predicted relationships types were more satisfied (5.14 mean) than those within relationships other than those they were predicted to enter (2.94).

Table 12.17 Independent t test results for Secure respondents

Secure respondents satisfaction	N	Mean	Standard deviation	Standard Mean Error
Respondents within predicted relationships	37	5.14	1.22	.20
Respondents within unexpected relationships	12	2.94	1.32	.38

Levene's test for Equality of Variances shows whether or not the two samples come from populations with similar variances. In this instance the F ratio is greater than the typical .05 which means the equal variance estimate for the t-test is chosen. This t-test provides a significance level of 0% at the 95% confidence interval. It can be stated with maximum certainty that differences in satisfaction are not likely to occur by chance. The null hypothesis that 'there is no difference in mean satisfaction' can therefore be rejected. Secure respondents are more satisfied within committed partnerships, courtships, childhood friendships and casual friendships.

Table 12.18 Independent samples test for secure respondents satisfaction

	Levene's test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of means		
	F	Significance	t	Degrees of freedom	Significance (two tailed)
Equal variances assumed	.114	.738	5.305	47	.000
Equal variances not assumed			5.102	17.584	.000

The same One-way ANOVA tests were run for anxious attachment respondents as are shown in table 12.19. With Anxious individuals the within group variance is greater than the between group variance and so the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. If the null hypothesis was rejected, the significance levels show that there would be a 68% that this would be wrong. Consequently, this finding

means that there is no difference in the levels of satisfaction between customers who were in the relationships they were expected to enter, rather than other relationship forms.

Table 12.19 One way ANOVA HO= There is no difference in satisfaction between Anxious respondents in predicted versus unexpected relationship types

	Sum of squares	Degrees of freedom	Mean sum of squares	F ratio	Significance
Between group	.271	1	.271	.175	.679
Within group	40.28	26	1.550		
Total	40.56	27			

Table 12.20 shows the results of ANOVA tests for avoidant individuals. The test shows that between-group variance is marginally greater than within-group variance. In this case however, if the null hypothesis is rejected, there is a 35% chance of making a mistake. Consideration of differences between avoidant individuals' levels of satisfaction is required. This is to establish whether satisfaction is determined by whether or not they are in the predicted or unexpected relationship type with Wing.

Table 12.20 One way ANOVA HO= There is no difference in satisfaction between Avoidant respondents in predicted versus unexpected relationship types

	Sum of squares	Degrees of freedom	Mean sum of squares	F ratio	Significance
Between group	3.322	1	3.322	1.064	.350
Within group	15.6.6	5	3.121		
Total	18.929	6			

Independent T-tests show that there is a variation in mean satisfaction where avoidant individuals in predicted relationships are more satisfied than those in unpredicted relationships.

Table 12.21 Independent t test results for Avoidant respondents

Avoidant respondents satisfaction	N	Mean	Standard deviation	Standard Mean Error
Respondents within predicted relationships	2	5.38	.88	.63
Respondents within unexpected relationships	5	3.85	1.93	.86

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances is .243 (compared to the typical .05 plus) and so the Equal variance estimate for the t-test provides a significance level of 35%. This significance level is high and so the null hypothesis that there is no difference in satisfaction between respondents within predicted versus unpredicted relationships cannot be rejected.

Table 12.22 Independent samples test for Avoidant respondent's satisfaction

	Levene's test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of means		
	F	Significance	t	Degrees of freedom	Significance (two tailed)
Equal variances assumed	1.748	.243	1.032	5	.350
Equal variances not assumed			1.433	4.418	.219

Within the Wing case the second hypothesis can only be partially supported. Only secure individuals who enter predicted relationship types were more satisfied than if they had entered alternative relationships. Anxious individuals were more likely to enter unexpected relationships and there was no difference in their level of satisfaction. Avoidant individuals were also more likely to enter unexpected relationships and high significance levels did not enable the null hypothesis to be rejected. It is therefore not possible to conclude that

respondents are less satisfied in unpredicted relationships. Attachment style was also tested within the third hypothesis.

12.4.3 The effect of consumer's attachment style on their brand preferences.

The third hypothesis stated that:

- a. Secure people will be highly satisfied with brands that rate highly in sincerity and competence traits.

- b. Anxious people will also be highly satisfied with brands that score highly on the sincerity trait .

- c. Avoidant people will be highly satisfied with brands that only have a low score in the sincerity trait.

The third hypothesis was tested using mean satisfaction across the scale dimensions, as was attachment style and brand personality scale.

Aaker's 42-item Likert scale was used to measure brand personality which is categorised into five facets. The seven point scale featured 1=not at all descriptive and 7= highly descriptive. The mean score for each of the facets can be seen in table 12.23.

Table 12.23 Brand personality facet means

Brand personality facet	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Competence	101	4.13	1.23
Sincerity	102	3.72	1.10
Excitement	103	2.87	1.14
Sophistication	103	2.86	1.29
Ruggedness	103	2.66	1.26

Table 12.23 shows that all of the facets except ‘competence’ fell below the mid point of the scale. Standard deviations are also consistently around 1 S.D. The implications are that Wing does not have a very strong brand personality as perceived by customers. This finding is reflective of the qualitative phase of research where it was identified that the commonly perceived brand personality may be an aspiration rather than actual. ‘Sincerity’ was the next highest rating personality facet after ‘competence’. One-way ANOVA tests were used to establish whether different attachment groups perceive the brand personality facet differently. Table 12.24 shows results of the ANOVA tests.

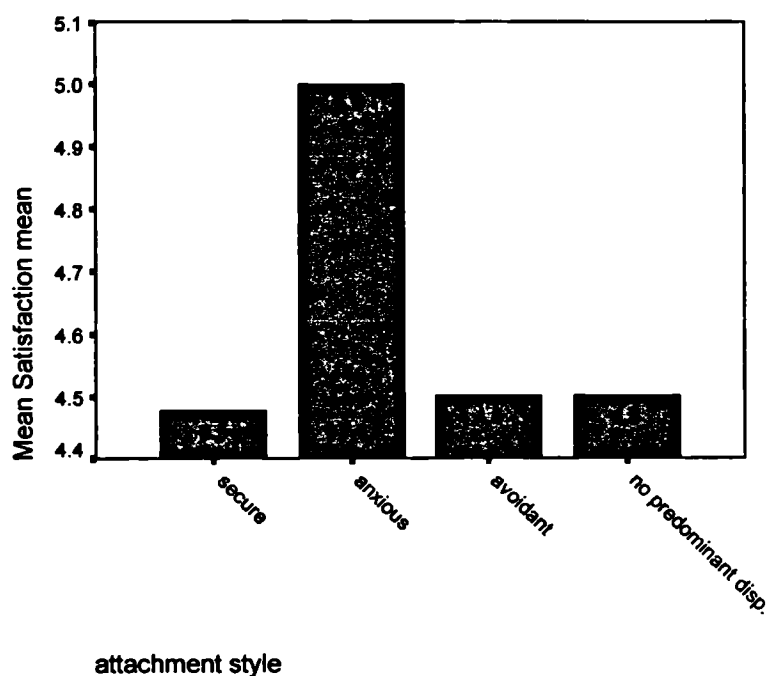
Table 12.24 ANOVA – HO There is no difference in different attachment groups mean scores for each of the brand personality types

Brand personality facet		Sum of squares	Degrees of freedom	Mean square	F	Significance
Competence mean	Within group	3.039	3	1.013	.661	.578
	Between group	148.631	97	1.532		
	Total	151.671	100			
Ruggedness mean	Within group	2.319	3	.773	.478	.698
	Between group	160.067	99	1.617		
	Total	162.387	102			
Sophistication mean	Within group	1.633	3	.544	.319	.812
	Between group	169.057	99	1.708		
	Total	170.690	102			
Excitement mean	Within group	.783	3	.261	.195	.899
	Between group	132.289	99	1.336		
	Total	133.072	102			
Sincerity mean	Within group	.476	3	.159	.128	.943
	Between group	121.446	98	1.239		
	Total	121.922	101			

Across all of the brand personality traits there is greater within group mean square difference than between group differences. In the Wing case the null

hypothesis that ‘there is no difference in the scores given for the brand personality facets between different attachment groups’ cannot be rejected. Figure 12.1 shows that anxious individuals are more satisfied. After closer inspection however it can be seen that on the 7 –point scale anxious respondents are only .05 more satisfied which is not substantial enough to sway the hypothesis finding in this case.

Figure 12.1 Mean satisfaction



To summarise hypothesis three, it was found in the Wing case that the hypothesis could not be supported. This was because there is no difference in the satisfaction levels or perceived brand personality by different attachment groups. In other words individuals do not perceive brand personality differently because of their attachment style and neither are they more satisfied being in relationships with brands scoring highly on particular personality facets.

The fourth hypothesis considered different forms of relationship marketing.

12.4.4 The effect of consumer's attachment style on the response to the form of relationship marketing.

The fourth hypothesis continues to investigate attachment style and states:

- a. Secure consumers will be best served and most satisfied within a relational strategy where customer-partnering strategies are incorporated.
- b. Anxious consumers will be best served and most satisfied within a relational approach but only when companies are in a position to keep promises and to maximise trust and provide the level of closeness required by the consumer.
- c. Avoidant subjects will be best served and most satisfied through a transactional approach as relationship approaches will lead to alienation.

To test the fourth hypothesis mean satisfaction across the scale dimensions were used along with attachment style, perception of closeness and a consideration of various forms of relationship marketing. The perception of whether or not particular relationship strategies were used by Wing along with an investigation concerning respondents views of relationship inducing practices were also used to test this hypothesis.

Findings from hypothesis three showed that there is no difference in the satisfaction between the three attachment groups. By looking at the perception of closeness in Table 12.25. it can be seen that 73% of respondents thought that the

closeness of the relationship was 'just right'. Early indications are that the fourth hypothesis may not be supported. This is due to the lack of difference in satisfaction between attachment groups and the majority of respondents being satisfied with the closeness of the relationship

Table 12.25 Perceived relationship closeness

Perceived closeness n=104	Percentage
The relationship is too close	6.7
The relationship is just right	70.2
The relationship is not close enough	23.1

Table 12.26 breaks out perceived relationship closeness into the different attachment styles. For secure individuals 56% believed the relationship to be just right but 40% considered it not close enough. Only 4% of secure respondents perceived the relationship as 'too close'. Anxious individuals were even more likely to perceive the relationship as 'just right' (67%) rather than 'not close enough' (22%) or 'too close' (11%). Avoidant individuals who would be expected to consider relationships as 'too close' did not hold this view of their relationship with Wing. Instead, they were more likely to consider it 'just right' (67%) or amazingly 'not close enough' (33%). If the chi square results for each attachment group are considered, it can be confirmed that all groups predominantly perceived the relationship to be 'just right'.

Table 12.26 Chi square result for each attachment groups perceived relationship closeness

Attachment style	Perceived relationship closeness	Observed	Expected	Residual
Secure (n=61)	Too close	3	20.3	-17.3
	Just right	41	20.3	20.7
	Not close enough	17	20.3	-3.3
Anxious (n=26)	Too close	4	8.7	-4.7
	Just right	19	8.7	10.3
	Not close enough	3	8.7	-5.7
Avoidant (n=10)	Too close	-	-	-
	Just right	8	5	3.0
	Not close enough	2	5	-3.0
No predominant disposition (n=7)	Too close	-	-	-
	Just right	5	3.5	1.5
	Not close enough	2	3.5	-1.5

The qualitative phase of research showed that, as with many airlines, a frequent flyer program was viewed as the main relationship-building tool. In addition, the provision of a website forum enabled more open discussions with customers. The value of the forum however, was questioned by some of those interviewed and was considered an open ground for complaints and irrelevant moaning. On the whole transactional based relationships are more likely to be operational rather than close relationship orientated approaches. This could account for the findings that secure and particularly avoidant individuals thought the relationship was ‘just right’ but, anxious individuals were expected to consider the relationship ‘not close enough’ more than was actually observed.

Respondents were questioned about their perception of different relationship building strategies. They were asked to indicate whether Wing operated any of

these strategies and if so whether they had any experience of these marketing tools.

Table 12.27 Relationship marketing strategies of Wing: as perceived and experienced by their passengers.

Strategy	Yes %	No %	Don't know %	Experienced % (% of those who thought strategy existed)		
				Y	N	DK
Frequent visitor programme	78.4	7.8	13.7	66.3	3.3	2.5
Company newsletters and updates	62.7	5.9	31.4	64.1	31.3	4.7
Corporate Magazines	46.1	9.8	44.1	42.6	57.4	-
Customer care training for staff	45.1	7.8	47.1	10.9	78.3	8.7
Open communications with customers	43.1	14.7	42.2	50.0	45.5	4.5
Database of customer details	43.6	7.9	48.5	40.9	38.6	20.5
Service personalised for the customer	20.6	29.4	50.0	47.6	38.1	14.3
Additional services for key customers	48.0	8.8	43.1	44.9	53.1	2.0
Mailings and promotions sent to customers	47.1	13.7	39.2	64.6	33.3	2.1
Special events cards/ gifts	16.7	27.5	55.9	35.3	58.8	5.9
Partnerships with other companies to provide additional services for customers	68.6	6.9	24.5	48.6	48.6	2.9

The strategies most highly recognised as being used by Wing were frequent flyer program (78%), partnerships with other companies (69%) and company newsletters and updates (63%). Of those who thought that Wing operated these strategies high percentages of these respondents considered themselves to have experienced or been involved with frequent flyer program (66%),

partnerships with other companies (49%) and company newsletters and updates (64%).

When asked how they felt about the use of various relationship strategies in general (via the 7 point scale where 1= strongly disapprove and 7= strongly approve), the mean score for each attachment group, (when rounded) exceeded the mid point of the scale for all strategies except special events gifts and cards. For this strategy, avoidant individuals only gave a mean score of 3.30. The means can be seen in Table 12.28.

Table 12.28 Attachment groups perceptions of different relationship marketing strategies.

Strategy	Secure mean	Anxious mean	Avoidant mean	No disp. mean
Frequent visitor programme	6.03	5.65	4.50	4.86
Company newsletters and updates	5.18	4.96	4.30	4.14
Corporate Magazines	4.65	4.27	4.10	3.86
Customer care training for staff	6.25	5.50	5.60	5.43
Open communications with customers	6.2	5.65	5.50	5.71
Database of customer details	5.17	4.73	3.90	3.86
Service personalised for the customer	5.77	5.62	4.70	5.71
Additional services for key customers	5.65	5.62	3.80	4.86
Mailings and promotions sent to customers	4.8	4.73	4.10	4.43
Special events cards/ gifts	4.67	4.38	3.30	4.71
Partnerships with other companies to provide additional services for customers	5.60	5.42	4.60	5.43

One way ANOVA and post hoc analysis showed that there are no significant differences at the .05 level attachment groups with regard to relationship strategies.

To summarise hypothesis four, the Wing sample does not support the hypothesis. All attachment groups were satisfied and there is no significant difference between their agreements with regard to different levels of relationship strategies.

The fifth hypothesis also considered different relationship marketing strategies.

12.4.5 The effect of the style of relationship marketing strategy on the quality of the consumer – brand relationship.

The fifth hypothesis stated that:

- a. 'Lower level' database relationship marketing strategies involving one way intelligence gathering will lead to a low BRQ and the only relationship likely to develop under such circumstances would be 'enslavement' relationships.
- b. Customer partnering with truly dyadic two-way relationship building strategies leads to high a BRQ and positive relationships.
- c. Frequent, tangible people based interactions lead to strong BRQ but the relationship potentially exists between the consumer and the employees rather than with the brand
- d. Infrequent non face to face to intangible based interaction weakens the BRQ but the relationship is more likely to be with the brand.

Because of the structure and topics of the fifth hypothesis, not all parts can be tested within the Wing case. The parts that can be tested are a and d. It has already been discussed within this chapter that Wing's relationship marketing strategy falls within the database marketing techniques.

For Part a, it was observed in hypothesis one that BRQ scores were low compared to the other case companies and given the nature of the service and the strategies used by Wing we can consider this part of the hypothesis supported. This will be discussed in more detail and further comparisons made between cases in chapter 13.

Part d considered whether or not the relationship is perceived by customers to be with the staff or the brand. Table 12.29 shows that on the 7 point scale where 1 represents the brand and 7 represents the staff, there is a strong tendency for respondents to perceive the relationship to be split between the brand and staff although it is marginally nearer to the brand. The nature of the service can be described as infrequent and although it is face to face there is little opportunity for relationships with staff to develop. This could account for the mean score being midway between the brand and staff. This part of the hypothesis will be explored in more detail during the cross case comparisons but it is likely that the hypothesis should be supported.

Table 12.29 Brand versus staff – perceived relationship.

(n=104)	Mean	Standard deviation
Is the relationship with the brand or staff?	3.82	1.72

12.5 CONCLUSION

To draw conclusions from the Wing case Table 12.30 summarises whether each of the hypotheses were supported or not.

Table 12.30 Overview of hypothesis results

Summary of hypothesis	Supported?
H1- The quality of each type of relationship consumers may have with their brands is dependent on the type of relationship between the parties.	Not supported
H2 –Attachment style determines levels of satisfaction within and the types of relationships sought.	Partially supported
H3 – Attachment style influences consumers' preferences for brands with particular personalities.	Not supported
H4- Attachment style will influence consumers' opinions towards different relationship marketing strategies.	Not supported
H5- Different forms of relationship marketing strategy will affect the brand relationship quality.	Testable parts a and d supported

As with the two other case companies, there was only limited support for research hypotheses. The qualitative research showed that Wing has a confused brand message. This was reflected in the quantitative phase where brand personality was not strongly rated in any of the five personality facets. Subsequently, the confused brand message may have also lead to a confused relationship. It was not possible in the Wing case to match relationship types with their hypothesised BRQ.

With regard to attachment style, only secure respondents were more likely to enter and be satisfied within the relationships they were predicted to prefer. Attachment style, like in the Brush and Comb cases was not found to influence opinions about relationship marketing strategy. Neither were differences

shown between different attachment styles in preference for particular brand personalities.

The database related relationship marketing strategy did correspond with a lower BRQ score, this will be further discussed in the next chapter when all three case studies are compared.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

CROSS CASE COMPARISON AND DISCUSSION

13.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous three chapters have investigated the findings of the three cases, Brush, Comb and Wing. The purpose of this chapter is draw comparisons across the case studies so that by considering and hypothesising why similarities and differences arise, more robust conclusions can be drawn. Yin (1984) suggested that one of the benefits of case studies is that they enable comparisons to be made which can lead to further understanding of hypotheses. Following Yin's (1984) advise, the cases are compared qualitatively as it is not appropriate to make statistical generalisations between cases. Case studies cannot be generalised to a population and therefore cannot be generalised to each other.

The chapter will first summarise, at a broad level, whether the research hypotheses were rejected or supported within each of the cases. The five hypotheses will then be discussed in order. Potential reasons for similarities and variations between the cases will be considered, this includes any methodological issues that may have contributed towards the findings. Clarification of contextual factors, which may have influenced the research will also be considered. Issues worthy of future research are raised as the chapter progresses.

13.2 OVERVIEW OF HYPOTHESIS TESTING RESULTS

Across all three case studies, the research hypotheses under investigation were only partially supported. The outcomes of the five hypotheses tested can be seen in table 13.1.

Table 13.1 Overview of hypothesis results

Summary of hypothesis	Brush	Comb	Wing
H1- The quality of each type of relationship consumers may have with their brands is dependent on the type of relationship between the parties.	Partially supported	Partially supported	Not supported
H2 –Attachment style determines levels of satisfaction within relationships and the types of relationships sought.	Not supported	Partially supported	Not supported
H3 – Attachment style influences consumer’s preferences for brands with particular personalities.	Not supported	Not supported	Not supported
H4- Attachment style will influence consumers’ opinions towards different relationship marketing strategies.	Not supported	Not supported	Not supported
H5- Different forms of relationship marketing strategy will affect the brand relationship quality.	Supported	Supported	Supported

The table shows that differences between the cases occurred in the first and second hypotheses. Only the fifth hypothesis was supported across all three case studies and hypotheses three and four were not supported across any of the cases. Universal lack of support for the third and fourth hypotheses indicates that attachment style was not useful in determining consumers’ relationship behaviour towards brands, within the context of this research study. There is only limited support for the second hypothesis which also considers the role of attachment style. It therefore could be possible that another behaviour

mechanism is more appropriate in consumer-brand relationships. The first hypothesis was partially supported by both the hair salon based cases but not the airline, this could indicate the nature of the service determines brand relationship quality. Barnes (1996) hypothesised that the nature of services governs relationship closeness and that services with a more interpersonal nature are more likely to be close. Each hypothesis will now be investigated in detail.

13.2 H1 – RELATIONSHIP QUALITY

The first hypothesis was partially supported by Brush and Comb but not by Wing. The hypothesis was proposed from assumptions made about the seven types of relationship under investigation (committed partnerships, courtships, fling, casual friendships, childhood friends, dependencies and enslavements) and the extent that each of the brand relationship quality facets (partner quality, love, intimacy, self concept connection, nostalgic attachment, commitment and passion) were appropriate to that relationship. From this assumption, propositions about the strength of the brand relationship quality were made and the relationships were then ranked according to expected BRQ scores.

The relationships that were discovered within each of the cases can be seen in table 13.2 below. The table outlines the percentage of respondents identifying each relationship and the overall BRQ score of each relationship. The relationships are listed in order of their expected rank.

Table 13.2 Relationships identified within each case

Relationship Type	Brush		Comb		Wing	
R=romantic, F=friendship, D=dark side	% Respondents identifying	BRQ score	% Respondents identifying	BRQ Score	% Respondents identifying	BRQ Score
High BRQ Expected						
Committed partnership (R)	28	37	16	34	7	29
Dependency (D)	10	38	2	35	0	0
Childhood friend (F)	17	31	16	28	7	23
Medium BRQ Expected						
Courtship (R)	16	25	6	22	12	23
Fling (R)	17	18	9	17	11	15
Casual friendship (F)	16	22	36	20	33	18
Low BRQ Expected						
Enslavement (D)	0	0	6	23	10	17

The table illustrates that the hypothesis can only be partially supported. Within the overall categories of the expected high, medium and low expected BRQ scores we can support the hypothesis for both the Brush and Comb cases. Within the hairdressing cases, the relationships identified by respondents were found to comply with the high, medium or low BRQ groups. The hypothesis falls down however, where the ordering of relationships within high, medium and low BRQ groups did not occur as expected. In the Wing case, the overall framework was not supported and the only relationship which achieved its expected rank was the committed partnership. Even the committed partnership rank should be viewed with caution as only 7% of the total respondent sample identified committed partnership as most closely representing their relationship with the airline. The need for caution is emphasised by the finding that, on further analysis only 2%

of respondents who actually chose to use the airline perceived their relationship to be a committed partnership. The result is a particularly small sample size making thorough empirical testing impossible.

With a much bigger sample, it would have been desirable to explore the separate BRQ facets with regard to each relationship type and at the same time split out each individual case study. Such an investigation could then identify whether there are particular facets that lower or raise the overall BRQ in a way that was not considered at the theory building stage of research when the high, medium and low categories were developed. For example, in the Comb case, the casual friendship relationship achieved a higher BRQ score than flings which, based on the theoretical underpinnings, and was an unexpected finding. Table 5.1 in chapter five outlined whether each of the relationships would achieve high, medium or low scores for each of the BRQ facets. Ordering and predictions for overall BRQ scores were then generated. The assumption that there was equal weighting of the different BRQ facets when they were ascribed high, medium or low scores was noted in chapter five as a limitation of the study. Although this limitation could not have contributed to the inability to accurately predict the order of the facets, it has restricted the ability to look at the magnitude of differences in the BRQ facets rank order. If it had been possible to assign a more defined score to each of the facets this would have enabled further comparison between facet order and between each of the cases.

Despite methodological issues, an interesting difference arises through cross case comparison in that both hairdressing cases can be partially supported yet the airline case cannot. Several explanations are plausible; firstly, satisfaction

may play a role. High levels of satisfaction were apparent in the hairdressing cases whilst Wing customers demonstrated low satisfaction. Combined with a low level of satisfaction, the creation of Wing through merging two airlines lead to the brand being misunderstood by target customers. Merging two airline brands with strong cultural roots and different brand heritages is likely to have created conflict between Wing's brand values. Frequently during interviews, Wing personnel raised issues relating to a confused consumer message. Staff were critical of the badly handled merger. A confused brand message and the fact that Wing had only existed for a year (at the time of fieldwork) could have contributed to respondents being uncertain about their relationship with Wing. For these confused respondents it is not surprising that BRQ could not be predicted accurately.

A further reason why the airline case could not be supported is linked to the concept of consumer choice. It was discussed earlier in the thesis that individuals often pay considerable attention to choosing the hair salon they visit but in the case of airlines, route limitations or schedules often prevent passengers from choosing who they fly with. The seven relationship types may not necessarily adequately cover the range of relationships experienced and 'enforced relationship' or 'marriage of convenience' may have been more appropriate. The option for respondents to specify an 'other relationship' was provided and 19% of respondents used this option predominantly to identify a business relationship.

Another interesting point with regard to the Wing case was that the BRQ facet 'nostalgic connection' was the second highest ranking BRQ facet. This is interesting because of the limited time for the brand to establish itself. It

could be possible that one of the original airlines, before the merger took place remains dominant in customers' minds.

Ordering the BRQ facets for each of the cases side by side provides further insight into similarities and differences between the cases. Table 13.3 below shows the BRQ facet rank order.

Table 13.3 BRQ scores for each case

Brush	Comb	Wing
Partner quality (6.2)	Partner quality (5.55)	Partner quality (3.93)
Love (5.19)	Love (3.99)	Nostal. connection (3.13)
Personal commitment (4.4)	Personal commitment (3.3)	Love (2.89)
Passionate attachment (3.96)	Passionate attachment (2.92)	Intimacy (2.65)
Self concept connection (3.92)	Nostalgic connection (2.91)	Personal Commitment (2.33)
Nostalgic connection (3.6)	Self concept connection (2.71)	Passionate attachment (2.20)
Intimacy (3.49)	Intimacy (2.45)	Self concept connection (1.94)

Sorting the individual BRQ facets for each case according to their means scores shows that for the two hairdressing cases remarkable similarity. The only differences found between the salons were between the 'self -concept connection' and 'nostalgic connection' facets. Brush customers identified a stronger connection between the salon and their self-concept than Comb customers who felt more nostalgic connections towards their salon. This is explained, in part, by the fact that Comb has provided hairdressing services for longer than Brush. The relevance of the self concept facet is likely to be more complicated for Comb than it is for Brush since many salons are within department stores. For those respondents who visited a store based salon there are essentially two brands which may or may not have similar characteristics. In

some instances respondents could encounter dissonance because either the store or the salon may not fit with their self-concept.

The intimacy BRQ facet, in particular, stands out when all three cases are examined. Surprisingly, given the nature of the service for the hairdressing cases, the intimacy facet was the lowest ranking BRQ facet for both salons. Equally unexpected is the airline finding where intimacy was ranked at the mid point within all BRQ facets. This finding contradicts Barnes' (1996) assertion that services which customers refer to as "my", lead to closer and more intimate relationships. It was assumed in chapter five that hairdressing services would fall into the "my" category whilst airlines would not. Hypothesis two is covered later in the chapter but it is worth pointing out some findings when investigating the second hypothesis, because they help to understand the intimacy conundrum.

When attachment styles were measured, their distribution differed significantly from what was expected for both the Brush and Comb cases. More respondents conformed to an insecure form of attachment style than was identified as normal by Simpson (1990). It was noted in the Brush case that there were higher numbers of respondents with avoidant attachment styles whilst 95% of respondents considered the closeness of the relationship to be just right. Along with the low intimacy scores compared to other BRQ facets, there are indications that either customers do not actually view their relationships as intimate, or that they prefer to keep them at arms length. Perhaps this is due to the personal nature of the service, since by using distancing techniques, customers can retain control of intimacy and the relationship. A desire to control intimacy is understandable where ultimately the relationship is a customer-supplier partnership, rather

than an actual “private life” interpersonal relationship. If the need for the service didn’t exist, then it is doubtful whether the individuals would retain contact. As a purchaser of a service, the customer may want to restrict intimacy particularly in a very personal service that tangibly contributes to self-image. The airline setting does not lend itself to the same issues as found within the hairdressing cases because the level of interpersonal interaction is not so relevant. It has been recognised that an airline consumer-brand relationship may be an ‘enforced’ relationship and several respondents identified a business relationship rather than an interpersonal relationship within Wing. The dilemma of multiple relationships, one with the actual brand and one with the brand representative in the form of an employee (in this study the stylist) is not as relevant within the airline industry. This may account for why Wing respondents don’t appear to want to use distancing techniques.

In the Brush and Comb cases, where the majority of respondents had established long-term relationships, the main reason for the inability to support the hypothesis relates to respondents’ distancing techniques. BRQ facets, which relate to the ability of salons to provide a satisfying and high quality service, for example the ‘partner quality’ facet, were scored highly. Facets involving a personal investment by the respondent such as ‘intimacy’ did not score as highly as expected. In the airline case, the confused brand message brought about following a merger is a plausible explanation as to why the hypothesis could not be supported.

The second hypothesis found similar issues with respect to customer distancing

techniques within the hairdressing cases so the hypothesis could only be partially supported and the Wing case did not support the hypothesis at all.

13.3 H2 – INFLUENCE OF ATTACHMENT STYLE ON RELATIONSHIP

SOUGHT

The second hypothesis considered the effect of consumers' personalities on their likelihood to enter different relationship types. The hypothesis combined the concept of attachment style with the metaphorical relationship under investigation. This was built on the assumption that people employ the same mental models about themselves when using service brands as they do within their personal relationships.

Secure individuals were considered more likely to enter committed partnerships, courtships, childhood friendships and casual friendships. This type of individual was considered unlikely to enter flings or dependency relationships because they endorse a 'love as friendship' attitude (Letty-Mann, 1996, Feeney, 1990). They also tend to have enduring relationships (Hazan, 1987, Shaver, 1992) and are unlikely to become obsessive (Simpson, 1990).

Anxious individuals were predicted to be more likely to have childhood friendships and dependent relationships. This is because they are particularly vulnerable in romantic associations. The highly obsessive and emotional characteristics of dependent relationships are mirrored in the behaviour of anxious people.

Avoidant individuals are preoccupied with avoiding intimacy and relationships tend to be ‘one night stands’ or casual friendships (Hazan, 1987, Feeney, 1990). Not surprisingly, avoidant respondents were expected to enter flings and casual friendships.

Satisfaction levels were considered to be important measures of the affinity between the relationship type and attachment style. The attachment styles of respondents identified within each of the case studies can be seen in table 13.3 below. The table also outlines the expected distribution of styles as identified by Simpson (1990) and confirmed by Bylsma (1997).

Table 13.3 Attachment style distribution

Attachment style	Brush (%)	Comb (%)	Wing (%)	Expected distribution (%)
Secure	53	47	61	70
Anxious	14	24	26	15
Avoidant	40	11	10	15

The first major issue to emerge is that the actual distribution of attachment styles for each case differs considerably from what was expected. One reason attachment style was chosen for the study was because attachment styles are believed to be consistent and therefore are applied across all relationships an individual encounters (Shaver, 1992). If attachment style was not consistent, leading to respondents characteristics changing according to relationship contexts, then the distribution differences found within the study would be understandable. This is because a relationship with a brand would be different to a relationship with a relative, friend or loved one, as the relationship is metaphorical and works in a similar way to a para-social relationship (Gummesson, 1999; Morris and Martin ,2000). But, as attachment styles are

consistent, an alternative explanation is required to understand why the distribution deviated from expectations.

None of the case studies replicated the anticipated distribution, although the overall pattern with the majority of respondents identifying secure styles was upheld in all cases. The Comb and Wing cases both had a greater proportion of anxious respondents and fewer avoidant respondents. The major outlier was found in the Brush case where 40% of respondents identified an avoidant style of attachment. The relationships that avoidant respondents were expected to enter could not be supported within the Brush case one possible reason is that respondents may have artificially exaggerated avoidant characteristics. Honesty in survey response has long been recognised as interference for researchers (Dillon, Madden & Firtle, 1994). The subject areas investigated (i.e. relationships with a corporate brand) combined with issues relating to distancing techniques as discussed for hypothesis one, suggests notable response bias in the Brush case. If bias has occurred, it is not clear why it is predominant within the Brush case rather than Comb or Wing. The Brush case had the highest response rate (47%) compared to Comb (35%) and Wing (32%). Response rate and honesty usually are positively related (Dillon, Madden & Firtle, 1994). Satisfaction levels were also highest among Brush respondents (mean score of 6.3 for overall satisfaction) compared to Comb (5.9) and Wing (4.9). It would seem more likely that customers would want to distance themselves further from brands which they are not satisfied with rather than those they are. Demographic differences should not alter attachment style distribution as, according to Bowman (1998), gender does not determine attachment style. Even if they did, although there were significantly more males in the Wing sample, demographically there was

little difference between the Brush and Comb case. It would be useful for future research to investigate whether respondents seek to distance themselves and if so under what circumstances within consumer-brand relationships.

The Wing case came closest to the expected attachment sample distribution. The nature of the airline service does not require self-disclosure to the same extent as in hairdressing. For this reason, respondents may be less guarded in their survey answers and this could account for Wing respondents more closely representing predicted attachment styles. Future research could investigate whether there are links between the types of relationship customers perceive they have with brands and the extent to which they feel they have to contribute to the relationship.

Despite approaching the expected attachment style distribution, hypothesis two could not be supported in the Wing case. Only Comb could partially support the hypothesis. Secure respondents who used Comb were more likely to identify one of the expected relationships. It was not possible to investigate whether there was a predominant disposition towards one of the three relationship types secure respondents were expected to enter because of the small sample sizes of different attachment style groups entering each individual relationship type.

The third hypothesis showed little advantage in using attachment style as a predictor of consumer relationship behaviour.

13.4 H3 – EFFECT OF ATTACHMENT STYLE ON BRAND PREFERENCE

This hypothesis was built upon the premise that respondents with different attachment styles would be most satisfied within brand relationships where specific personality characteristics are present. Utilising Aaker's (1995) brand personality measurement enabled the premise to be measured. Aaker (1995) renamed the frequently applied 'Big Five' personality traits within her measurement scale. The 'Big Five' had previously also been applied to studies of attachment style (Shaver & Brennan, 1992). Of the five personality traits, it was only possible to test the 'sincerity' and 'competence' traits because these were the only traits where correlations existed with both attachment style and brand personality.

Three sub- hypotheses were proposed for each attachment style. Secure respondents were expected to be more satisfied with brands they perceive have high sincerity and competence traits. Anxious individuals should also be more satisfied with brands were perceived as being highly sincere. Avoidant individuals conversely should prefer brands that were perceived as not being sincere. None of the sub-hypotheses could be supported for any of the case contexts.

Within each of the cases, the highest ranked brand personality facet was 'competence'. Table 13.4 shows the scores of each of the facets within the cases.

Table 13.4 Brand personality facet ranked mean scores

Brush Mean score	Comb Mean score	Wing Mean score
Competence (5.64)	Competence (4.90)	Competence (4.13)
Excitement (5.02)	Sincerity (4.49)	Sincerity (3.72)
Sincerity (4.96)	Excitement (4.32)	Excitement (2.87)
Sophistication (4.86)	Sophistication (4.24)	Sophistication (2.86)
Ruggedness (2.76)	Ruggedness (2.51)	Ruggedness (2.66)

The table above shows that the personalities of the three brands are remarkably similar. As the target markets for each of the hairdressing brands were fairly similar and both salons were aiming for an upmarket, fashionable yet attainable image so it is not surprising that their brand personalities would be perceived so similarly. With the exception of the Brush brand, where excitement and sincerity facets are reversed, the rank order is identical. For each of the brands the ruggedness facet was the least descriptive personality facet. In both the hairdressing cases, ruggedness was significantly less descriptive than the other four facets but in the case of the airline, there was not such a marked distinction between the highest ranking facets and the lowest ranked facet. For Wing, three facets; excitement, sophistication and ruggedness did not achieve a mean score which reached the mid point of the Likert scale.

As in each of the cases both sincerity and competence achieved a mean score above the mid point of the Likert scale, it was expected that secure and anxious individuals would be more satisfied than avoidant individuals. Brand personality scores result from customer perceptions and, as with all perception, are subject to a perceptual filtering influenced by previous experiences, socialisation and individuals' personalities (Fisk, 1982). As a personality trait attachment style could influence the way individuals perceive the personality of relationship

partners.

One way ANOVA tests were applied to each of the case companies to determine whether secure, anxious and avoidant individuals perceived the brand personality facets similarly. The tests showed that in each of the cases, attachment style did not alter respondents' perception of the brand personality facets. If perceptions differed because of attachment style, then it would not have been possible to analyse the sample as a whole and each attachment group would need to be analysed separately.

In the Comb case, respondents who showed no predominant disposition towards any of the attachment styles perceived the ruggedness and sincerity traits as more reflective of the brand's personality than other respondents. This group of respondents was also marginally more satisfied than the rest of the sample however, they did not differ enough to be statistically significant.

The reasons why the hypothesis could not be supported would be a fruitful subject for further research, however it appears that matching consumers and brands based on the compatibility of the relationship elements of their personalities does not lead to a higher level of satisfaction with the service.

Aaker's (1995) findings that consumers prefer brands which match their 'working self concept' have not been supported in this research in the predicted manner. 'Working self concept' consists of 'self' factors and 'situational' factors. It was predicted that the 'self' factors would be influenced at least partially by attachment style and this has not happened within the case settings studied. In

this research it appears that situational factors dominate. Further investigation to establish why this has occurred and whether particular services are more susceptible would be beneficial. This could enable marketers to target their brands emphasising the elements of the brands personality that would appeal to the 'situational' factors of customers working self concepts. Alternative measures of 'self factors' should also be considered within future research as attachment style was not a productive measure within this research.

Like the second and third hypotheses, the fourth hypothesis could not be supported within this study and again it appears to be due to the concept of attachment style.

13.5 H4 – EFFECT OF ATTACHMENT STYLE

The fourth hypothesis applied the concept of attachment style within the revised relationship marketing framework devised in this study. The four item framework was based on the works of both Brodie (1997) and Barnes (1994) to include:

1. Customer partnering (characterised by: high intimacy, integrating customer to develop service and internal marketing paramount)
2. Customer retention (characterised by: customisation, integrating brand message, increasing trust and intimacy)
3. Psuedo relationship (characterised by barriers to exit from relationship and social bonds)
4. Database marketing (characterised by using databases to achieve intimate familiarity with the customer)

The four items each refer to a form of relationship marketing practice. Different attachment groups were predicted to differ in their opinions towards the various forms of relationship marketing. Secure respondents were expected to prefer practices associated with customer partnering strategies. Anxious respondents were also expected to prefer a relational approach however the brands must be able to fulfil their promises otherwise anxious customers would quickly develop negative attitudes towards the brand. Avoidant respondents were expected to prefer an arms length transactional approach so they would not have to enter a relationship at all. Avoidant respondents were predicted to disapprove of any relationship marketing practice.

The qualitative research enabled each case organisation's relational strategy to be categorised according to one of the four types of relationship marketing strategy. Brush could be described as operating a customer partnering strategy with the large number of relationship building initiatives used by the company. The customer was viewed as a partner with whom the sharing of information and long-term commitment to the relationship was considered paramount. Although Comb personnel emphasised their database usage to store customer details and target them with offers and gifts, the relationship approach was not restricted to purely database marketing and the salon can be described as following a customer retention strategy.

Wing, by contrast, was mainly using a database marketing strategy. Throughout Wing it was apparent that they viewed long-term relationships as unattainable and sought to use their frequent flyer programme just to encourage repeat usage. Even though service recovery programmes were developed as a means of retaining customers, the airline did not build any customer bonds or use

strategies that would equate to a higher level of relationship marketing strategy.

The types of relationship marketing tools as perceived by respondents can be seen in Table 13.5. The table includes an indication of the highest level of relationship marketing strategy likely to be achieved by using the stated tool.

Although identification of a level of relationship marketing strategy is subjective and using just one tool does not constitute a complete strategy, it can be used as a guide for triangulation purposes.

Table 13.5 Perception of Relationship marketing strategies used within each of the case organisations.

Relationship marketing tool	Highest level of RM strategy	Brush % respondents identified strategy	Comb % respondents identified strategy	Wing % respondents identified strategy
Frequent visitor / flyer programme	Database	17	9	78
Company newsletters and updates	Retention	19	7	63
Corporate magazines	Retention	30	10	46
Customer care training for staff	Partnering	50	33	45
Open communications with customers	Partnering	64	64	43
Database of customer details	Database	61	61	44
Service personalised for the customer	Retention	62	50	21
Additional services for key customers	Retention	15	15	48
Mailings and promotions sent to customers	Database	17	15	47
Special events cards/ gifts	Retention	49	19	17
Partnerships with other companies to provide additional services for customers	Pseudo	17	8	69

The table shows that Brush was perceived by more respondents to use tools which contribute towards a customer partnering strategy. Comb respondents

also showed a greater awareness of customer retention and partnering strategies being used. Wing respondents, although not ruling out the higher level relationship marketing strategies, were most likely to identify database strategies being used by the airline. The perceptions of respondents are consistent with the findings from the qualitative research and so it can be assumed that the levels of relationship marketing assigned are reflective of the strategies operated.

The main hypothesis that individuals would differ in their views towards the different relationship marketing strategies because of their attachment style was not supported in any of the case studies. The results from this study further question the applicability of attachment style to consumer-brand relationships and the general marketing field. Within the Brush case, avoidant respondents were found to strongly disapprove of partnerships with other companies. It was within the Brush case where there were significantly more avoidant respondents than expected which was attributed to customers using relationship-distancing techniques. Not wanting to become involved with third parties may add credibility to the distancing technique argument.

The fifth hypothesis also considered the types of relationship marketing strategies but this time with regard to their effects on brand relationship quality.

13.6 H5 – INFLUENCE OF RELATIONSHIP STRATEGY ON RELATIONSHIP QUALITY

The final hypothesis proposed that different relationship strategies would lead to stronger or weaker brand relationship quality. It also stated that the frequency

with which the service was used should determine whether the relationship was with the brand or front line employees. Lower level relationship marketing strategies were thought to only produce a weak BRQ whilst the customer partnering dyadic strategies should lead to a strong BRQ. Frequently used services, which were characterised by 'people based' dealings, would lead to a strong BRQ. In this situation however there was a strong possibility that the primary relationship would be between customers and front line employees. Conversely, infrequently used services, which are generally intangible in nature, should have a weaker BRQ but the relationship should develop with the brand.

As already discussed the Brush and Comb case companies represent the 'higher level' relationships with frequent 'people-based' interactions. The Wing case represented a 'lower level' relationship marketing. The core of the Wing brand was not necessarily people based in the same way as the hairdressing brand (even though front line service staff are very important to the relationship) and for the majority of respondents, service usage is rarely a frequent occurrence.

As all four parts of the hypotheses could not be tested within a single case study it is only through comparison that the overall hypothesis can be supported. The 'higher level' relationship marketing strategies used by Brush and Comb did achieve higher BRQ scores than Wing which was using 'lower level' tactics.

The 'higher level' relationship marketing tactics exist within the categories of customer partnering and customer retention within the relationship marketing framework devised in this study. The characteristics of these higher level categories require tactics which will encourage a high level of intimacy,

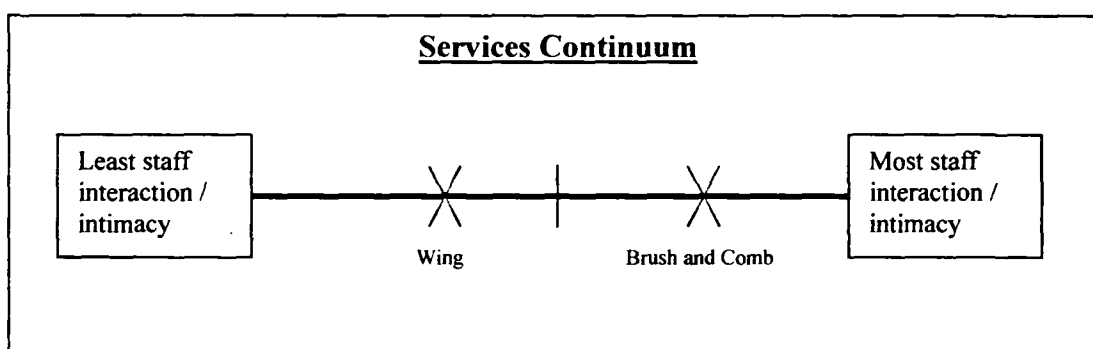
trust, integrating the customer into the service to better manage and develop the service according to their needs. On a practical level, in contexts where it is difficult to gain access to customers and particularly where the customer has a many alternative options than to use the particular service brand in question, it is likely that this level of relationship marketing would be costly and resource intensive. If organisations are not able to commit to such relationship investment with all customers, situations may arise where it is feasible to develop this level of relationship with a sub-segment of customers who are less expensive to serve due to their strong affinity with the brand. As a result, methods of segmenting customers according to their 'closeness' to the brand and developing tactics designed to incorporate rules of interpersonal relationships such as Argyle and Henderson's (1984) rules of friendship may be possible with specially selected groups of customers. This could benefit the brand through improved customer perceptions translating into positive word of mouth. A danger arises if this 'elite' group of customers with whom the organisation develops stronger relationships is selected because of their financial commitment rather than affinity with the brand. If the most profitable customers are solely chosen, then the practice could be perceived as another locking in device and therefore a lower level pseudo relationship strategy.

Investigating whether the relationship was with the brand or with employees has generated some interesting findings. In both the Brush and Comb cases the relationship was strongly viewed as being with staff (score 5.9 and 6.1 on the seven point scale with 7 representing staff). In the Wing case the relationship was perceived to be more with the brand, with a score of 3.8. Within the services marketing literature, the role of front line staff is frequently cited as a

principal factor in brand success or failure (Bowen and Lawler, 1992) and so acknowledgment by respondents about the role they play in their experiences with the airline are understandable.

Further research would be beneficial to understand at which point relationships change from being perceived with staff to being a brand relationship. Service brands are constantly at the mercy of the moods and social skills of employees, even where comprehensive and expensive training packages are in place. The ability to consistently please customers is easier to control if the primary relationship is perceived to be with the brand. This study has considered two different service types yet many more exist. There is a continuum of different forms of services both with regard to the level of intimacy (Barnes, 1994) and in terms of extent of staff interaction. With respect to these considerations, this study probably resides at the points shown in Figure 13.1 below.

Figure 13.1



There are many services which could be more pronounced in terms of their relationship marketing strategy. Having a well enacted brand strategy would contribute towards the brand relationship quality and also make the service offering more coherent in terms of the extent to which the relationship is with the brand or the staff. This study cannot generalise to other service contexts but it has indicated that further investigation should be encouraged. Many

traditional services have changed in their nature over the last decade. For example, the personal banking sector, once had a moderate level of staff interaction but recently has been criticised for becoming faceless to the majority of its customers during a period where relationship marketing in the sector has flourished.

13.7 CONCLUSIONS

Throughout this chapter key issues have emerged. With regard to the first hypothesis, which can only be partially supported, the hairdressing cases supported the overall high, medium and low, BRQ rankings. A research limitation leading to an inability to assign more sensitive scores to BRQ prevented further probing into the relationship between relationship type and the quality of relationships. The role of satisfaction was thought to be one construct that was more likely to be linked with BRQ but no relationship was found between satisfaction and relationship type. The salons which had high levels of overall satisfaction also had high BRQ scores whilst the airline with low satisfaction only generated a low BRQ. Within the airline case a confused brand message is believed to contribute towards confused brand relationship.

The 'intimacy' facet provided interesting findings as this only generated a low score within the salons which contradicts Barnes's (1994) premise about intimate relationships. The intimacy facet findings link with the second hypothesis where respondents appear to use distancing techniques within the salon cases. This finding also appears to also be influential within the third hypothesis where the role of attachment style in consumer-brand relationships was further questioned.

Aaker's (1996) concept of working self-concept and specifically the associated 'self' factors were not influenced by attachment style. In each of the case studies 'situational' factors were dominant.

The applicability of attachment style was again questioned in the fourth hypothesis, as respondents were not found to differ in their views towards various relationship marketing tactics because of this aspect of personality.

The fifth hypothesis was the only premise to be wholly supported. This hypothesis based the cases within the overall contextual nature of services. Findings from this hypothesis indicate that there is much scope for future research to consider alternative service contexts.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

CONCLUSION

14.1 INTRODUCTION

This concluding chapter will begin with a review of the consumer-brand relationship model and theory, in light of the research findings. Suggested alterations to the model will be proposed before a consideration of the contribution that has been made by this research to advancing knowledge.

All research inevitably has limitations and those that apply to this research programme will be discussed along with suggested ways they may be overcome in future research.

Several areas worthy of future research were identified within the cross case comparisons, these will be consolidated and discussed. Implications derived from the research to marketing practice are considered before a final concluding statement draws the thesis to an end.

14.2 CONSUMER-BRAND RELATIONSHIPS MODEL AND THEORY

The thesis fused the areas of branding and relationship marketing to further the understanding of relationships between consumers and brands.

The theory building stage of research began by questioning what was meant by the term 'relationship'. Within the field of marketing, during a period of substantial growth in the 'relationship marketing' literature, the meaning of the 'relationship' construct was rarely explored. Based on the combined fields of personal relationships, relationship marketing and metaphorical brand relationships the following working definition was posed:

A relationship is a dynamic, mutually perceived and interdependent interaction between two or more parties, which is maintained by emotional bonds, commitment, intimacy, and reciprocity.

Relationship marketing has been perceived as the strategic tool for building relationships with consumers yet relationship marketing does not necessarily build a true relationship. Harker's (1999) definition of relationship marketing was subscribed to within this research. To recap the definition states:

"An organisation engaged in proactively creating, developing and maintaining committed, interactive and profitable exchanges with selected customers (partners) over time is engaged in relationship marketing" (page 16).

Several elements of the relationship construct do not appear within Harker's (1999) definition of relationship marketing. The concepts of emotional bonds and intimacy do not feature and yet are considered fundamental in building consumer-brand relationships (Fournier, 1996; Barnes, 1994; Sheaves and Barnes, 1996). One possible reason may be the paucity of research into brand level relationships.

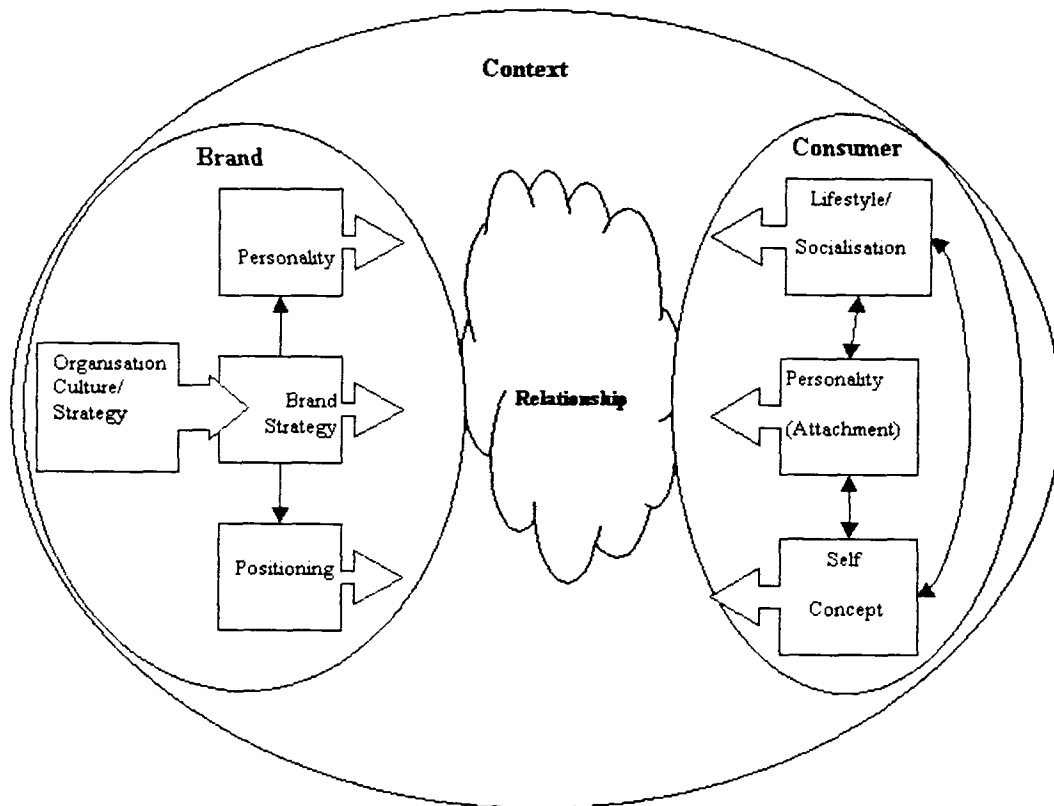
The existing consumer-brand relationship research argued that consumers would form relationships with brands in order to add meaning to their lifestyles (Fournier, 1996; Cohen, 1997). Also, individuals would build intimate relationships with brands they perceived to be similar to themselves. Within this study the converse occurred, intimacy was actually avoided rather than sought by consumers. The findings also show that the concept of relationship intimacy is neither linear nor simple. Within the Brush case where the greatest satisfaction levels were found and the brand-relationship quality was highest, intimacy was most likely to be avoided.

The notion of consumers seeking out brands that fulfil both their functional and emotional needs is reinforced within consumer-brand relationship theory. Consumers were expected to express themselves through the interaction between their own personality and brand personality (Aaker, 1995) in order to fulfil their symbolic and emotional needs. Because of the need to investigate the dynamic interaction, and following the recommendations of Blackston (1993), the consumer-brand relationship model was developed with both the brand and consumers in mind.

Four broad dimensions were included within the model, these were: the brand; the consumer; the relationship and the context. The brand dimension of the model was broken down further to specifically consider: organisational strategy; brand strategy; brand personality and brand positioning. The consumer side of the model was similarly deconstructed to include: lifestyle/socialisation; attachment style; self concept.

The model can be seen again within figure 14.1.

Figure 14.1 Consumer-brand relationship model.



Despite the lack of complete support for four out of five hypotheses posed, for a number of reasons, the consumer-brand relationship model should not be disregarded altogether. Firstly, the hypotheses did not directly address the construction of the broad model but looked at specific interactions between consumers and brands. Secondly, whilst complete hypotheses could not be supported, the overall broad hypotheses in some instances were not rejected. Hypothesis one for example found those relationships' BRQ scores could be predicted as being high, medium or low within the hairdressing cases. It was

whilst attempting to rank relationships within the high, medium and low BRQ groups that it was not possible to support the hypothesis.

One area of the model that should be adjusted however, relates to attachment style. It was not clear within the findings whether respondents disclosed their 'true' attachments style that they would apply to interpersonal relationships. This will be further discussed within the research limitations section of the chapter. It was apparent from the findings that other personality behavioural mechanisms should be considered either in place or in addition to attachment. The attachment style dimension of the model should therefore be replaced with 'personality' until a more specific mechanism is identified.

On the brand side of the model, the dimensions identified were found to be useful in interpreting results. Brand strategy and positioning in particular appear to influence consumer-brand relationships. In the context of the two salons investigated, both companies had well defined brand strategies and positions within their market. Both Brush and Comb were found to have strong relationships with their consumers and relationship quality was high compared to Wing, which transmitted a confused brand message. Relationship marketing strategies were assumed to stem from overall organisational culture and strategy and this appeared to be true within the companies studied.

Several knowledge gaps in consumer-brand relationship research were evaluated in light of the model. The gaps chosen for investigation within this research stem directly from the model which provided a good basis for research boundaries.

The issues identified were incorporated into the research programme and led to contributions to the theory of consumer-brand relationships.

14.3 CONTRIBUTION TO THEORY

Research gaps identified as positive contributions to theory included both broad and specific brand level relationship topics. No existing research was found which linked relationship marketing with brand level relationships and this study attempted to move the field into this area. Previous research also had not considered how different relationship marketing strategies would influence consumer-brand relationships. On the whole, there was little research which considered the interaction between two relationship partners when one member of the dyad was a brand. At a general level, studies into consumer-brand relationships have predominantly been undertaken within FMCG sectors, whilst work involving relationship marketing had evolved from a services perspective. Relationship marketing research and practice has successfully moved into more areas of consumer goods (Morris & Martin, 2000) but because of the relatively early stages of theoretical development consumer-brand relationships have yet to be fully studied within a services context.

With regard to more specific points, Fournier (1994) and Gordon et al. (1998) had identified different forms of metaphorical relationships consumers might enter into with brands. The quality of each of these relationships has not been quantitatively evaluated, despite a valid and reliable quality measurement device being available in the form of Fournier's BRQ measure. Furthermore, with specific reference to consumer-brand relationship theory, there remains the

need to investigate the role consumer personality plays in relationship behaviour.

Questions that were raised included:

To begin filling the gaps in knowledge, three research questions were posed:

1. Does relationship quality depend on the type of relationship that exists?
2. What effect does consumer personality have on brand relationships?
3. What are the influences of relationship marketing strategies on consumer-brand relationship quality?

The research questions were further split into the five hypotheses which were discussed throughout the second half of this thesis.

14.3.1 The quality of different forms of relationship

This research has demonstrated that different forms of relationships vary by quality, but contextual factors may play an influencing role. The ability to anticipate a brand's relationship quality, based on the type of relationship consumers perceive, was not clear-cut. For the two hair salon brands satisfaction was high, brand strategies were well defined and, in this service setting, consumers demonstrate high levels of involvement. In these cases it was possible at a broad level to predict whether brand relationship quality would be high, medium or low based on the form of the relationship consumers believed they shared with the brand. For the airline case, where satisfaction was low and a confused brand message was present, it was not possible to link relationship quality with relationship type. The research also demonstrated that it is difficult

to distinguish the quality between different relationships which have similar characteristics.

14.3.2 The effect of consumer personality on brand level relationships

The role of consumer personality and its influence on relationships with brands has been shown to be more complex than originally thought. Although attachment style is the area of personality responsible for controlling behaviour within relationships, for brands it is not applied in the same manner as it is for interpersonal associations. Attachment styles were expected to influence how satisfied consumers were within different forms of brand relationships. This proposition was not supported within the research and a confounding factor emerged. A large proportion of the most satisfied consumers appeared to artificially exaggerate avoidant characteristics in order to be seen to distance themselves from the brand relationship.

It was postulated that attachment would influence consumers in their brand preferences, since they should prefer brands whose personalities most closely matched their own. However, this was not supported by this research.

Finally with regard to the role of personality, attachment was not a useful variable when seeking to understand whether or not consumers would relate positively or negatively to different relationship marketing tactics.

14.3.3 The influence of relationship marketing strategy on brand relationship quality.

Although perception of relationship marketing tactics is not dependent on attachment style, the quality of the consumer-brand relationship does depend on the marketing strategy. Various researchers have identified different levels of relationship marketing. This study showed that customer partnering and customer retention strategies, and their associated tactics, led to higher quality relationships than pseudo relationships and database marketing techniques. This methodology could apply a more deductive approach than has been possible within this study. A hypothetico-deductive stance was taken within this study. This was because of the lack of previous work which quantitatively measured relationships consumers perceived they had with brands.

14.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

As with all studies, issues related to fieldwork, research design, sample sizes and study boundaries lead to limitations. Three further limitations exist within this study. The first drawback occurred because of the inability to draw findings from a second airline case study. Numerous attempts were made to retrieve the Glide case, but despite repeatedly contacting the organisation, it was impossible to gain their involvement. . When it was certain that the case could not be salvaged and, after much searching, another airline could not be found, an alternative service industry was contemplated. As the airline industry was considered contextually unique, an alternative industry was not thought to offer benefits in terms of replicating Wing's market characteristics. In addition, the research programme was deliberately timed so that the customer based

fieldwork for each of the cases ran concurrently to avoid any confounding factors brought about from temporal changes in the market environment. Problems with the sample size for Glide only became apparent once fieldwork was part-way through and as such an alternative case would have to have been investigated at a much later time. Although a single case within an industry limits external validity, Yin (1984) ascertained that sole cases still enable valid contributions to be made because case studies are generalised to theory and not to populations.

The second limitation is specific to the first research hypothesis and refers to the inability to more precisely assign a BRQ facet score. Individual facets were assigned an expected high, medium or low score. It was suggested within the cross case comparisons that because it was not possible to more precisely assign scores, investigation into the magnitude of facet rank order was not possible. Greater score definition would have enabled further comparisons between the cases.

The third limitation concerns the sample sizes available when respondents were grouped according to the forms of relationship they perceived they had with the brands. If larger samples were available when respondents were broken out into their perceived relationships, this would have enabled more detailed analysis. Future research should try to generate larger samples. Methodologies that enable screening for particular relationships, combined with boundaries where fewer relationships would be investigated, should lead to larger sample sizes within each of the relationships.

14.5 FURTHER RESEARCH

Several areas worthy of further investigation were identified throughout the thesis. A 'by-product' of the first two hypotheses forms the first topic that could be undertaken in future research. Significant numbers of respondents were found to use distancing techniques in order to either reduce, or deny, intimacy in brand relationships. Examining why individuals behave in this manner and under what circumstances would be valuable, particularly as this study found that the most satisfied respondents (thus potentially more profitable) appear more likely to behave in this manner.

The research boundaries did not enable the whole spectrum of relationship forms to be investigated and several other relationship forms were recognised as valid. These included business relationships, marriages of convenience and enforced relationships. Other forms may also be relevant in different contexts and provide ample scope for additional exploration. This study only considered two service contexts and so many alternative service characteristics require investigation.

Aaker's (1995) findings that consumers prefer brands which match their 'working self concept' were not supported by the findings from this research in the predicted manner. 'Situational factors' were more dominant than 'self factors' in the current study. 'Self factors' were expected to be influenced by attachments style. Further investigation should be carried out to establish whether particular service contexts are more susceptible to situational factor dominance.

The research findings raised uncertainties about the concept of attachment style playing a role in consumer-brand relationships. The relationships consumers enter into with brands are ultimately metaphorical and as attachment style directs actual interpersonal relationships with tangible beings, it may not be an appropriate construct for applying to future research. If attachment style is not valuable, then future research should attempt to discover which personality dimensions play a role in consumer brand relationships.

The final area identified for further research is associated with the finding that the level of relationship marketing strategy determines relationship quality. On a continuum of service types and their associated relationship strategies, only two points were covered. The ends of the continuum ranged from services with the least to the most staff interaction and intimacy. The service contexts used within this study did not feature at the polar extremes of the scale and further research would be beneficial.

14.6 IMPLICATIONS FOR MARKETING MANAGEMENT

Although research into brand level relationships is in its infancy, key learning's are still applicable to marketing practice.

As organisational relationship strategy is directly related to the quality of brand relations, marketers should incorporate 'rules of friendships' and other interpersonal relationships into their strategies. Importantly, strategies which seek to trap consumers into long-term relationships where they are not in a position to freely leave as they wish should be avoided. Long-term customer retention is more likely to occur when 'committed partnerships' are

developed. Low levels of satisfaction and perceived quality are associated with 'enemyships' and so these relationships should be avoided whenever possible.

Marketers should be aware that even when consumers are highly satisfied with a brand, and service quality is highly rated, they might appear to want to avoid intimacy. It is not yet clear why this may be the case but it would be unwise to dissuade these customers in favour of others because in reality they may be the most loyal and profitable.

A number of ethical dilemma's should also be considered by practitioners seeking to build brand level relationships. Attempting to measure consumer's relationship preference for the purpose of generating a closer relationship could, be construed by some, as manipulative. In recent years the concept of permission marketing as identified by Seth Godwin (1999) has become popular. Brought about by the technological advances made, permission marketing advocates that consumers be encouraged to gradually over separate brand encounters diverge more personal information about themselves. This should occur at the consumers pace which could overcome ethical concerns about consumers being forced to provide information about themselves should they wish to participate in a relationship. When combined within the relationship marketing programme, permission marketing could ensure that the balance of power within the relationship is more equal. In summary however, any form of marketing practice is subject to criticism for manipulative or unethical behaviour Dickinson et al (1986). Practitioners should therefore be aware that this is also the case with trying to build strong consumer-brand relationships and ensure that

consumers do not feel trapped or victimised within 'lower level' psuedo relationships.

14.7 CONCLUDING STATEMENT

This research has shown that positive gains for business research can be achieved by combining the fields of branding and relationship marketing. The elements associated with the concept of a relationship, such as intimacy and emotional bonds, have rarely been incorporated into relationship marketing programmes yet this study demonstrates that unless they are present, relationships are unlikely to become committed.

APPENDICES

1. Letter to recruit airlines – major airline version
2. Letter to recruit airlines – ‘low cost’ airline version
3. Letters to recruit hair salons
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 - b. Airline version
6. Qualitative questionnaire
 - a. Salon version
 - b. Airline version
7. Case study database
8. Customer questionnaire
 - a. Salon version
 - b. Airline version
9. Rationale for inclusion of each question in the quantitative customer survey
10. Customer survey covering letter
 - a. Salon version
 - b. Airline version

Appendix 1



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Kellie Vincent

«Title» «FirstName» «LastName»
«JobTitle»
«Company»
«Address1»
«Address2»
«City» «PostalCode»

Dear «Title» «LastName»

I am currently investigating consumer-brand relationships for my PhD. research and am looking for companies to participate as case studies for the fieldwork phase of my work. My research involves investigating customer relationships with airlines. It considers customer loyalty and commitment in relation to the airlines brand and relationship strategies. Different types of relationships have been identified and this research seeks to establish the quality of each type of relationship, the types of consumers likely to enter each type of relationship and the effect of relationship promoting strategies.

If you would agree to take part in this research, all findings relating specifically to «Company» would be presented to you. The information would identify the forms of relationships you are building with your passengers and how best to maintain these relationship types. It would also enable you to confirm whether the types of relationships you are building are appropriate with regard to the preferred relationship approach of your passengers.

This research is wholly financed by the Open University Business School and would not require monetary investment by «Company». It would involve in-depth interviews with employees who are responsible for brand building and marketing. As a major part of the research involves a quantitative survey of customers, customer mailing details would be required from you to generate a random sample of passengers.

As a major airline, your involvement would be greatly valued and is important for the success of this research. All company specific details will of course be treated in confidence and the reported work will remain anonymous.

I will call you in a couple of days to discuss this in more detail however if you wish to speak earlier then please feel free to contact me.

Thank you in advance for your interest.

Yours sincerely,

Kellie Vincent

Appendix 2



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Kellie Vincent

«Title» «FirstName» «LastName»
«JobTitle»
«Company»
«Address1»
«Address2»
«City» «PostalCode»

Dear «Title» «LastName»,

I am currently investigating consumer-brand relationships for my PhD. research and am looking for companies to participate as case studies for the fieldwork phase of my work. My research involves investigating customer relationships with airlines. It considers customer loyalty and commitment in relation to the airlines brand and relationship strategies. Different types of relationships have been identified and this research seeks to establish the quality of each type of relationship, the types of consumers likely to enter each type of relationship and the effect of relationship promoting strategies.

If you would agree to take part in this research, all findings relating specifically to «Company» would be presented to you. The information would identify the forms of relationships you are building with your passengers and how best to maintain these relationship types. It would also enable you to confirm whether the types of relationships you are building are appropriate with regard to the preferred relationship approach of your passengers.

This research is wholly financed by the Open University Business School and would not require monetary investment by «Company». It would involve in-depth interviews with employees who are responsible for brand building and marketing. As a major part of the research involves a quantitative survey of customers, customer mailing details would be required from you to generate a random sample of passengers.

As a major airline in the low cost sector, your involvement would be greatly valued and is important for the success of this research. All company specific details will of course be treated in confidence and the reported work will remain anonymous.

I will call you in a couple of days to discuss this in more detail however if you wish to speak earlier then please feel free to contact me.

Thank you in advance for your interest.

Yours sincerely,

Kellie Vincent

Appendix 3



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Telephone (01908) 655888
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Kellie Vincent
Brand Management and Marketing Research Unit

12th November 1998

For the attention of the Marketing Department

Dear Sir / Madam

I am currently investigating consumer-brand relationships for my PhD. research and am looking for companies to participate as case studies for the fieldwork phase of my work. My research involves investigating customer relationships with their hair salons. This research seeks to establish the quality of the relationships customers have with brands, the types of consumers likely to enter each type of relationship and the effect of relationship promoting strategies.

If you would agree to take part in this research, I would be pleased to prepare a report for you about the forms of relationships you are building with your clients and how best to maintain these relationship types.

All work is supervised by Prof. Leslie de Chernatony, director of the Brand Management and Marketing Research Unit. He is a leading authority on branding who has published widely and is consulted on brand management issues.

This research is wholly funded by the Open University Business School and would not require monetary investment by Saks. It would involve some in-depth interviews with stylists and employees who are responsible for brand building and salon marketing. As a major part of the research involves a quantitative survey of customers questionnaires would have to be handed out in the salons to generate a random sample of clients.

As a major salon chain in this industry, your involvement would be greatly valued and is important for the success of this research. All company specific details will of course be treated in confidence and the reported work will remain anonymous.

I will call you in a couple of days to discuss this in more detail however if you wish to speak earlier then please feel free to contact me.

Thank you in advance for your interest.

Yours sincerely,

Kellie Vincent

Appendix 4



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Telephone (01908) 655888
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Kellie Vincent
Brand Management and Marketing Research

7th June 1999

Dear ,

I am currently carrying out research with Brush / and am writing to ask for your help.

(key informant) has given me your name and salon details to contact you regarding your part in the study. (number) other Brush / Comb salons are taking part in this research which considers relationships built between the Brush / Comb brand and customers.

The study is in two parts a staff survey and a customer survey to hand to clients as they leave the salon. Replies for both surveys will be mailed directly back to the Business School in a reply paid envelope. It is anticipated that questionnaires will only need to be handed out to clients for a week and all clients should be included for that time so there will be no need to judge whether someone should be given a copy.

I will telephone to arrange the most convenient time to discuss this with you. If you would like to speak earlier however, then please feel free to contact me here at the Business School.

I look forward to speaking with you.

Kind regards,

Kellie Vincent BSc.(Hons) MSc.

Appendix 5a



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Kellie Vincent
Brand Management and Marketing Research

Brush / Comb
Salon team member

June 1999

Dear Sir / Madam

I am carrying out research with Brush/Comb as part of my PhD. studies. Professor Leslie de Chernatony who is a leading authority on branding, is supervising the research.

The research considers relationships built between the Brush/Comb brand and customers. Salon staff are vital in building these relationships and therefore your views are very important to this study.

I would be very grateful if you would spend a few minutes to complete a questionnaire about Regis Hairstylists. This will only take a short time to complete.

All responses will be treated in the strictest confidence and will be anonymous. I have included a stamped, return envelope for you.

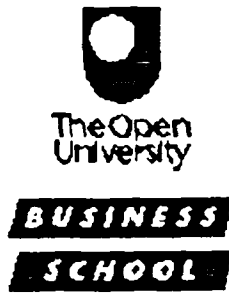
If you have any questions about the survey then please feel free to contact me at the Open University Business School on the number above.

I look forward to receiving your valuable opinions. Thank you in advance for your help.

Kind regards,

Kellie Vincent BSc.(Hons) MSc.
PhD. Research Student
Brand Management and Marketing Research Unit

Appendix 5b



**The Open University
Business School**
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Milton Keynes
MK7 6AA

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Kellie Vincent
Brand Management and Marketing Rese

Wing / Glide
Cabin and Ground Crew staff member

July 1999

Dear Sir / Madam

I am carrying out research with Monarch Airlines specifically with Wing/Glide as part of my PhD. studies. Professor Leslie de Chernatony who is a leading authority on branding, is supervising the research.

The research considers relationships built between the Wing / Glide brand and customers. Cabin and ground staff are vital in building these relationships and therefore your views are very important to this study.

I would be very grateful if you would spend a few minutes to complete a questionnaire about Wing / Glide. This will only take a short time to complete.

All responses will be treated in the strictest confidence and will be anonymous. I have included a stamped, return envelope for you.

If you have any questions about the survey then please feel free to contact me at the Open University Business School on the number above.

I look forward to receiving your valuable opinions. Thank you in advance for your help.

Kind regards,

Kellie Vincent BSc.(Hons) MSc.
PhD. Research Student
Brand Management and Marketing Research Unit



Brush / Comb Team Members Survey

Please complete this questionnaire as fully as possible. Your opinions are greatly appreciated. You will find any specific instructions shown in *italics*.

The Brush / Comb Brand

1. What do you think makes a Brush / Comb salon different to other salons?

2. What efforts are made within the salon to convey these differences to the customer ?

3. Quickly work through the characteristics listed below and indicate your first reaction to whether or not they describe Brush / Comb .

(Circle only one number per characteristic within the range where 7 indicates extremely descriptive and 1 indicates not at all descriptive)

<u>Characteristics</u>	Not at all descriptive						Extremely descriptive
a. Wholesome	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
b. Down to earth	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
c. Friendly	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
d. Honest	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
e. Sincere	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
f. Family orientated	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
g. Small town	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
h. Original	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
i. Cheerful	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
j. Sentimental	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
k. Daring	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix 6a

Characteristics		Not at all descriptive					Extremely descriptive	
l.	Imaginative	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
m.	Exciting	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
n.	Spirited	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
o.	Trendy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
p.	Unique	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
q.	Independent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
r.	Up to date	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
s.	Young	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
t.	Cool	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
u.	Contemporary	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
v.	Intelligent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
w.	Secure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
x.	Confident	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
y.	Corporate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
z.	Technical	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
aa.	Successful	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
bb.	Reliable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
cc.	Leader	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
dd.	Hardworking	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
ee.	Glamorous	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
ff.	Smooth	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
gg.	Charming	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
hh.	Feminine	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
ii.	Good looking	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
jj.	Upper Class	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
kk.	Tough	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
ll.	Outdoorsy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
mm.	Rugged	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
nn.	Masculine	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
oo.	Western	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Customer Relationships with Brush / Comb

Would you say that the relationships customers have with Brush / Comb as a service brand, is actually with the brand or with the salon team members.

(Please circle one number only within the range where 7 indicates that your relationship is with staff and 1 indicates that your relationship is with the brand)

Brand							Team members	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7		

4. Please explain why you think the relationship is with the brand or the salon team members?

Appendix 6a

5. What initiatives are taken at a company level to build relationships with customers?

6. What is your personal role in building relationships with customers and how do you attempt to do this?

About you

7. Please state your job title

.....

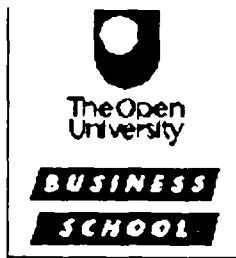
8. How long have you worked for Brush / Comb

(Please tick one box only)

Less than a month.	<input type="radio"/> 1	Between three and five years	<input type="radio"/> 5
Less than six months	<input type="radio"/> 2	Over five years	<input type="radio"/> 6
Six months to a year	<input type="radio"/> 3	Over ten years	<input type="radio"/> 7
Between a year and three years	<input type="radio"/> 4		

Thank you very much for your time in completing this questionnaire.

All responses will be treated in the strictest confidence and will remain anonymous.
Please return the completed questionnaire in the reply paid envelope provided.



Wing / Glide Staff Survey

Please complete this questionnaire as fully as possible. Your opinions are greatly appreciated. You will find any specific instructions shown in *italics*.

The Wing / Glide Brand

1. What do you think makes Wing / Glide different to other airlines ?

2. What efforts are made by the airline to convey these differences to passengers ?

3. Quickly work through the characteristics listed below and indicate your first reaction to whether or not they describe Wing / Glide.

(Circle only one number per characteristic within the range where 7 indicates extremely descriptive and 1 indicates not at all descriptive)

<u>Characteristics</u>		Not at all descriptive						Extremely descriptive
a.	Wholesome	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
b.	Down to earth	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
c.	Friendly	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
d.	Honest	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
e.	Sincere	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
f.	Family orientated	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
g.	Small town	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
h.	Original	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
i.	Cheerful	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
j.	Sentimental	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
k.	Daring	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<u>Characteristics</u>		Not at all descriptive						Extremely descriptive

Appendix 6b

l.	Imaginative	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
m.	Exciting	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
n.	Spirited	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
o.	Trendy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
p.	Unique	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
q.	Independent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
r.	Up to date	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
s.	Young	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
t.	Cool	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
u.	Contemporary	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
v.	Intelligent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
w.	Secure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
x.	Confident	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
y.	Corporate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
z.	Technical	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
aa.	Successful	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
bb.	Reliable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
cc.	Leader	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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ii.	Good looking	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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kk.	Tough	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
ll.	Outdoorsy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
mm.	Rugged	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
nn.	Masculine	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
oo.	Western	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Customer Relationships with Wing / Glide

Would you say that the relationships customers have with Wing / Glide as a service brand, is actually with the airline or with the staff.

(Please circle one number only within the range where 7 indicates that your relationship is with staff and 1 indicates that your relationship is with the brand)

Brand						Staff
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

4. Please explain why you think the relationship is with the airline or the staff?

Appendix 6b

5. What initiatives are taken at a company level to build relationships with customers?

6. What is your personal role in building relationships with customers and how do you attempt to do this?

About you

7. Please state your job title

.....

8. How long have you worked for Wing / Glide

(Please tick one box only)

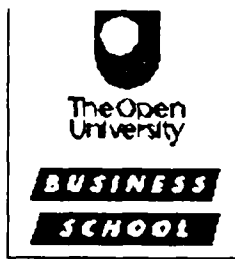
- | | | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Less than a month. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | Between three and five years | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| Less than six months | <input type="radio"/> 2 | Over five years | <input type="radio"/> 6 |
| Six months to a year | <input type="radio"/> 3 | Over ten years | <input type="radio"/> 7 |
| Between a year and three years | <input type="radio"/> 4 | | |

Thank you very much for your time in completing this questionnaire.

All responses will be treated in the strictest confidence and will remain anonymous.
Please return the completed questionnaire in the reply paid envelope provided.

Appendix 7**Case Study Database**

	BRUSH	COMB	WING
Item	FREQUENCY	FREQUENCY	FREQUENCY
QUALITATIVE PHASE			
Qualitative in-depth interviews	5	5	5
Staff survey	20	14	13
Observation reports	4	4	4
DOCUMENTS			
Newspaper articles	-	1	12
Press releases	-	4	6
Magazine articles	1	3	-
Market research	1	1	3
Corporate magazines	1	-	1
Internal magazines	1	-	-
Trade reports	5	4	-
Print advertising	3	2	5
TV advertising	-	-	1
Customer price list	1	1	-
Customer frequent flyer brochure	-	-	1
Route guide	-	-	1
Company information pack	1	-	-
Staff training video	3	-	1
QUANTITATIVE SURVEY			
Customer survey final dataset	115	88	104



B / C Survey

Please complete this questionnaire as fully as possible. Your opinions are greatly appreciated. You will find any specific instructions shown in *italics*.

About your use of B / C

1. How long have you been using B / C?

(Please tick one box only)

- | | | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Less than a month. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | Between three and five years | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| Less than six months | <input type="radio"/> 2 | Over five years | <input type="radio"/> 6 |
| Six months to a year | <input type="radio"/> 3 | Over ten years | <input type="radio"/> 7 |
| Between a year and three years | <input type="radio"/> 4 | | |

2. Did you personally make a conscious decision to use B / C rather than another salon?

(Please tick one box only)

- | | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| Yes I decided | <input type="radio"/> 1 | |
| No someone else decided | <input type="radio"/> 2 | please explain----- |
| There was no choice | <input type="radio"/> 3 | please explain----- |

3. Please indicate your level of agreement for the following statements regarding your use of hair salons.

(Circle one number only within the range where 7 indicates that you strongly agree and 1 indicates that you strongly disagree with the statement)

- | | Strongly disagree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Strongly agree |
|--|-------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|----------------|
| a. I normally use a different salon | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| b. I occasionally use another salon | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| c. I prefer to only use B / C | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| d. I am only trying B / C | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| e. I choose the salon depending on the situation | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| f. I will use any salon | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

4. Which level of service do you usually opt for ?

(Please tick one box only)

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| Hair cut and finish | <input type="radio"/> 01 |
| Hair cut and finish and Beauty treatments | <input type="radio"/> 02 |
| Specialised hair treatment i.e. perm | <input type="radio"/> 03 |
| Specialised hair treatment and Beauty treatments | <input type="radio"/> 04 |

About B / C

5. Please evaluate the quality of each of these specific aspects you encounter when coming to a B / C salon.

(Circle one number only within the range where 7 indicates excellent and 1 indicates very poor)

	Very poor						Excellent
a. Quality of contact person(s)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
b. Quality of core service i.e. the style	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
c. Quality of the salon	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
d. Overall quality	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

6. (This question has two parts, please tick one box for each of the stated practices for both part i and part ii of the question)

i. Please state whether you think B / C operates any of the following marketing practices.

ii. Please state whether you have experienced, or are involved in any of the stated practices with B / C

	Part i. Operates ?				Part ii. Involved ?		
	Yes	No	Don't know		Yes	No	Don't know
a. Frequent visitor programme	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Company newsletters and updates	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Corporate magazines	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Customer care training for staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Open communication with customers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. Database of customer details	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. Service personalised for the customer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. Additional services for key customers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i. Mailings and promotions sent to customers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j. Special events or occasions cards / gifts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
k. Partnerships with other companies to provide additional services for customers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. Quickly work through the characteristics listed below and indicate your first reaction to whether or not they describe B / C.

(Circle only one number per characteristic within the range where 7 indicates extremely descriptive and 1 indicates not at all descriptive)

Characteristics	Not at all descriptive						Extremely descriptive
a. Wholesome	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
b. Down to earth	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
c. Friendly	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
d. Honest	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
e. Sincere	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
f. Family orientated	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
g. Small town	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix 8 a

<u>Characteristics</u>		Not at all descriptive						Extremely descriptive
h.	Original	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
i.	Cheerful	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
j.	Sentimental	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
k.	Daring	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
l.	Imaginative	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
m.	Exciting	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
n.	Spirited	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
o.	Trendy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
p.	Unique	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
q.	Independent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
r.	Up to date	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
s.	Young	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
t.	Cool	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
u.	Contemporary	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
v.	Intelligent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
w.	Secure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
x.	Confident	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
y.	Corporate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
z.	Technical	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
aa.	Successful	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
bb.	Reliable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
cc.	Leader	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
dd.	Hardworking	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
ee.	Glamorous	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
ff.	Smooth	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
gg.	Charming	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
hh.	Feminine	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
ii.	Good looking	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
jj.	Upper Class	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
kk.	Tough	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
ll.	Outdoorsy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
mm.	Rugged	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
nn.	Masculine	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
oo.	Western	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Your relationship with B / C

This part of the study requires you to use your imagination and pretend that the brands we use can act in the same way as people. It needs you to imagine that somehow B / C as a service brand can come to life and become a person with human qualities. Think about the ways you would interact with brands as if they were people. This may seem strange but it is not so unusual, for example, many people think of their cars in this way and much advertising research requires people to think of brands as people having personalities. All this study asks is for you to take this one step further and consider the relationships you may have with B / C as a service brand.

Appendix 8 a

8. Please indicate your satisfaction with each of these specific aspects of the relationship between yourself and B / C.

(Circle one number only within the range where 7 indicates very satisfied and 1 indicates not at all satisfied)

	Not at all satisfied						Very satisfied
a. Satisfaction with contact person(s)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
b. Satisfaction with core service i.e. the style	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
c. Satisfaction with the salon	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
d. Overall satisfaction	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

9. Imagine that B / C is a person with whom you have a relationship. Which of the following types of personal relationship as outlined below would best describe your association.

(Please read all 8 statements first and then tick one box only.)

- a. **My relationship with B / C is like that of a committed partnership.** ☐ 1
We have a long term socially supported union. We are committed to stay together despite adverse circumstances.
- b. **My relationship with B / C is like that of a courtship.** ☐ 2
I am trying this airline to see whether we get along and will become committed partners in the future.
- c. **My relationship with B / C is like a fling.** ☐ 3
I have no feelings of commitment to this airline although the short contact with which we have had is highly rewarding. I have no plans to stay with this airline although it has served its purpose.
- d. **My relationship with B / C is like that of a casual friend.** ☐ 4
We interact infrequently as and when the opportunity arises and get on when we do although I couldn't say whether we will continue to be friends in the long term.
- e. **My relationship with B / C is like that of a childhood friend.** ☐ 5
We do not see each other very often but when we do I can think of earlier times and experiences with this airline. This airline makes me feel comfortable.
- f. **My relationship with B / C is like that of a dependency relationship.** ☐ 6
When separated from this airline and I am not able to fly with them, I become anxious as this airline is irreplaceable.
- g. **My relationship with B / C. is like that of an enslavement.** ☐ 7
I have no choice but to be in the relationship, which I feel, is completely controlled by the airline.
- h. **My relationship with B / C is not like any of those mentioned above** ☐ 8
It is more like a

(please state a type of relationship it can be likened to)

Appendix 8 a

10. Which of the following statements best describes how you feel about your relationship with B / C in terms of its 'closeness'?

(Please tick only one box.)

- a. The relationship is too close. ☐ 1
- b. The relationship intensity is just right. ☐ 2
- c. The relationship is not close enough. ☐ 3

11. Would you say that the relationship you have with B / C as a service brand, is actually with the brand or with the salon staff.

(Please circle one number only within the range where 7 indicates that your relationship is with staff and 1 indicates that your relationship is with the brand)

Brand							Staff
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

12. Working through quickly, please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement, with the following statements regarding B / C.

(For each statement, please circle one number only within the range where 7 indicates that you strongly agree and 1 indicates that you strongly disagree with the statement)

		Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
a.	This salon takes good care of me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
b.	This salon treats me like an important and valuable customer.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
c.	This salon shows continuing interest in me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
d.	This salon has always been good to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
e.	This salon is reliable and dependable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
f.	I really love this salon.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
g.	I have feelings for this salon that I don't have for many other airlines.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
h.	This is my favourite salon of all.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
i.	This salon will always reminds me of a particular phase of my life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
j.	This salon reminds me of things I've done or places I've been.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
k.	This salon reminds me of what I was like at a previous stage of my life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
l.	I have at least one fond memory that involves using this salon.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
m.	Using this salon somehow makes me feel at home.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
n.	This salon plays an important role in my life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
o.	Something would be missing from my life if this salon wasn't around any longer.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
p.	I feel that this salon and I were really meant for each other.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix 8 a

		Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
q.	Every time I use this salon, I'm reminded of how much I like and need it.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
r.	I am addicted to this salon in some ways.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
s.	I would be very upset if couldn't use this salon when I wanted it.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
t.	There are times when I really long to use this salon again.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
u.	No other salon in the category can quite take the place of this salon.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
v.	I feel like something's missing when I haven't used the salon for a while.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
w.	I feel very loyal to this salon.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
x.	This salon can count on me to always be there.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
y.	I have made a pledge of sorts to stick with this salon.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
z.	I will stay with this salon through good times and bad.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
aa.	I have always been faithful to this salon in spirit.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
bb.	I am willing to make small sacrifices in order to keep using this salon.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
cc.	I have a lot of faith in my future with this salon.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
dd.	The salon says a lot about the kind of person I am or want to be.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
ee.	The salon reminds me of who I am.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
ff.	The salon's image and my self image are similar in a lot of ways.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
gg.	This salon and I have a lot in common.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
hh.	This salon helps me make a statement about what is important to me in life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
ii.	This salon is part of me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
jj.	I know a lot about this salon.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
kk.	I feel though I really understand this salon.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
ll.	I feel though I have known this salon forever.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
mm.	I know a lot about B / C as a company	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

About you

The following questions are very important to the success of this research. Please note that **no** individuals names or details will be passed on to B / C or any other company. The information **will not** be stored for alternative uses in the future.

Appendix 8 a

13. Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements about your relationships with other people in general.

(Please circle one appropriate number per statement where one indicates you strongly disagree and seven that you strongly agree.)

		Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
a.	I find it relatively easy to get close to others	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
b.	I'm not very comfortable having to depend on other people	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
c.	I'm comfortable having others depend on me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
d.	I rarely worry about being abandoned by others	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
e.	I don't like people getting too close to me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
f.	I'm somewhat uncomfortable being close to others	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
g.	I find it difficult to trust others completely	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
h.	I'm nervous whenever anyone gets too close to me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
i.	Others want me to be more intimate than I feel comfortable being	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
j.	Others are as reluctant to get as close as I would like	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
k.	I often worry that my partner(s) don't really love me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
l.	I rarely worry about my partner(s) leaving me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
m.	I often want to merge completely with others, and this desire sometimes scares them away.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

14. As a customer, what is your attitude towards the strategies used by companies to build relationships with customers.

(Please circle one appropriate number per stated strategy where one indicates you strongly disapprove these strategies and seven that you strongly approve.)

		Strongly disapprove						Strongly approve
a.	Frequent visitor programme	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
b.	Company newsletters and updates	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
c.	Corporate magazines	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
d.	Customer care training for staff	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
e.	Open communication with customers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
f.	Database of customer details	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
g.	Service personalised for the customer	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
h.	Additional services for key customers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
i.	Mailings and promotions sent to customers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix 8 a

		Strongly disapprove						Strongly approve
j.	Special events or occasions cards / gifts	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
k.	Partnerships with other companies to provide additional services to customers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Please could you complete the following details about yourself.

15. Your gender

Male ☐ 1 Female ☐ 2

16. Your age group

Under 16	<input type="radio"/> 1	46 – 55	<input type="radio"/> 5
17 – 24	<input type="radio"/> 2	56 – 65	<input type="radio"/> 6
25 – 35	<input type="radio"/> 3	66 – 75	<input type="radio"/> 7
36 – 45	<input type="radio"/> 4	Over 76	<input type="radio"/> 8

17. Please state your occupation

18. Please state the average number of times you use a hair salon per year.

..... Times per year.

19. Your reason for visiting the salon

(Please tick one box for both part a and part b)

A	On this occasion		B	On most other occasions	
	Regular appointment	<input type="radio"/> 1		Regular appointment	<input type="radio"/> 1
	Special occasion	<input type="radio"/> 2		Special occasion	<input type="radio"/> 2
	Treat	<input type="radio"/> 3		Treat	<input type="radio"/> 3
	Other	<input type="radio"/> 4		Other	<input type="radio"/> 4

20. On this occasion, which B / C salon did you visit.

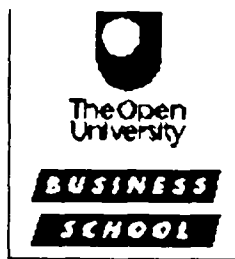
.....

Thank you very much for your time in completing this questionnaire.

All responses will be treated in the strictest confidence and will remain anonymous.

Please return the completed questionnaire in the reply paid envelope provided.

Kellie Vincent, Open University Business School, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes MK7 6AA



W/G Survey

Please complete this questionnaire as fully as possible. Your opinions are greatly appreciated. You will find any specific instructions shown in *italics*.

About your use of W/G

1. How long have you been flying with W/G?

(Please tick one box only)

- | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| Less than a month. | <input type="radio"/> 1 | Previously with Fly | – over five years | <input type="radio"/> 5 |
| Less than six months | <input type="radio"/> 2 | Previously with Fly | – over ten years | <input type="radio"/> 6 |
| Six months to a year | <input type="radio"/> 3 | | | |
| Between a year and three years | <input type="radio"/> 4 | | | |

2. Did you personally make a conscious decision to use this airline rather than another airline ?

(Please tick one box only)

- | | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| Yes I decided | <input type="radio"/> 1 | |
| No someone else decided | <input type="radio"/> 2 | please explain----- |
| There was no choice | <input type="radio"/> 3 | please explain----- |

3. Please indicate your level of agreement for the following statements regarding your use of airlines.

(Circle one number only within the range where 7 indicates that you strongly agree and 1 indicates that you strongly disagree with the statement)

- | | Strongly disagree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Strongly agree |
|--|-------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|----------------|
| a. I normally use a different airline | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| b. I occasionally use another airline | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| c. I prefer to only use W/G | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| d. I am only trying W/G | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| e. I choose the airline depending on the situation | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| f. I will use any airline | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

4. Which class of travel do you usually opt for ?

(Please tick one box only)

- ☐ 01
☐ 02
☐ 03

Appendix 8b

About W/G

5. Please evaluate the quality of each of these specific aspects you encounter when using W/G.

(Circle one number only within the range where 7 indicates excellent and 1 indicates very poor)

	Very poor						Excellent
a. Quality of contact person(s)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
b. Quality of core service i.e. the flight	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
c. Quality of the airline	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
d. Overall quality	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

6. (This question has two parts, please tick one box for each of the stated practices for both part i and part ii of the question)

i. Please state whether you think W/G operates any of the folloW/G marketing practices.

ii. Please state whether you have experienced, or are involved in any of the stated practices with W/G.

	Part i. Operates ?				Part ii. Involved ?		
	Yes	No	Don't know		Yes	No	Don't know
a. Frequent flyer programme	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Company newsletters and updates	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Corporate magazines	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Customer care training for staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Open communication with customers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. Database of customer details	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. Service personalised for the customer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. Additional services for key customers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i. Mailings and promotions sent to customers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j. Special events or occasions cards / gifts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
k. Partnerships with other companies to provide additional services for customers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. Quickly work through the characteristics listed below and indicate your first reaction to whether or not they describe W/G.

(Circle only one number per characteristic within the range where 7 indicates extremely descriptive and 1 indicates not at all descriptive)

Characteristics	Not at all descriptive						Extremely descriptive
a. Wholesome	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
b. Down to earth	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
c. Friendly	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
d. Honest	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
e. Sincere	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
f. Family orientated	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
g. Small town	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix 8b

	<u>Characteristics</u>	Not at all descriptive						Extremely descriptive
h.	Original	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
i.	Cheerful	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
j.	Sentimental	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
k.	Daring	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
l.	Imaginative	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
m.	Exciting	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
n.	Spirited	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
o.	Trendy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
p.	Unique	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
q.	Independent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
r.	Up to date	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
s.	Young	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
t.	Cool	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
u.	Contemporary	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
v.	Intelligent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
w.	Secure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
x.	Confident	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
y.	Corporate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
z.	Technical	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
aa.	Successful	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
bb.	Reliable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
cc.	Leader	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
dd.	Hardworking	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
ee.	Glamorous	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
ff.	Smooth	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
gg.	Charming	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
hh.	Feminine	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
ii.	Good looking	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
jj.	Upper Class	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
kk.	Tough	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
ll.	Outdoorsy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
mm.	Rugged	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
nn.	Masculine	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
oo.	Western	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Your relationship with W/G

This part of the study requires you to use your imagination and pretend that the brands we use can act in the same way as people. It needs you to imagine that somehow W/G as a service brand can come to life and become a person with human qualities. Think about the ways you would interact with brands as if they were people. This may seem strange but it is not so unusual, for example, many people think of their cars in this way and much advertising research requires people to think of brands as people having personalities. All this study asks is for you to take this one step further and consider the relationships you may have with W/G as a service brand.

Appendix 8b

8. Please indicate your satisfaction with each of these specific aspects of the relationship between yourself and W/G.

(Circle one number only within the range where 7 indicates very satisfied and 1 indicates not at all satisfied)

	Not at all satisfied						Very satisfied
a. Satisfaction with contact person(s)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
b. Satisfaction with core service i.e. the flight	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
c. Satisfaction with the airline	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
d. Overall satisfaction	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

9. Imagine that W/G is a person with whom you have a relationship. Which of the followW/G types of personal relationship as outlined below would best describe your association.

(Please read all 8 statements first and then tick one box only.)

- a. **My relationship with W/G is like that of a committed partnership.** ☐ 1
We have a long term socially supported union. We are committed to stay together despite adverse circumstances.
- b. **My relationship with W/G is like that of a courtship.** ☐ 2
I am trying this airline to see whether we get along and will become committed partners in the future.
- c. **My relationship with W/G is like a fling.** 3 ☐
I have no feelings of commitment to this airline although the short contact with which we have had is highly rewarding. I have no plans to stay with this airline although it has served its purpose.
- d. **My relationship with W/G is like that of a casual friend.** 4 ☐
We interact infrequently as and when the opportunity arises and get on when we do although I couldn't say whether we will continue to be friends in the long term.
- e. **My relationship with W/G is like that of a childhood friend.** ☐ 5
We do not see each other very often but when we do I can think of earlier times and experiences with this airline. This airline makes me feel comfortable.
- f. **My relationship with W/G is like that of a dependency relationship.** ☐ 6
When separated from this airline and I am not able to fly with them, I become anxious as this airline is irreplaceable.
- g. **My relationship with W/G is like that of an enslavement.** 7 ☐
I have no choice but to be in the relationship, which I feel, is completely controlled by the airline.
- h. **My relationship with W/G is not like any of those mentioned above** ☐ 8
It is more like a

(please state a type of relationship it can be likened to)

Appendix 8b

10. Which of the folloW/G statements best describes how you feel about your relationship with W/G in terms of its 'closeness'?

(Please tick only one box.)

- | | |
|--|-------------------------|
| a. The relationship is too close. | <input type="radio"/> 1 |
| b. The relationship intensity is just right. | <input type="radio"/> 2 |
| c. The relationship is not close enough. | <input type="radio"/> 3 |

11. Would you say that the relationship you have with W/G as a service brand, is actually with the brand or with the airline staff.

(Please circle one number only within the range where 7 indicates that your relationship is with staff and 1 indicates that your relationship is with the brand)

Brand							Staff
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

12. Working through quickly, please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement, with the folloW/G statements regarding W/G.

(For each statement, please circle one number only within the range where 7 indicates that you strongly agree and 1 indicates that you strongly disagree with the statement)

		Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
a.	This airline takes good care of me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
b.	This airline treats me like an important and valuable customer.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
c.	This airline shows continuing interest in me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
d.	This airline has always been good to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
e.	This airline is reliable and dependable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
f.	I really love this airline.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
g.	I have feelings for this airline that I don't have for many other airlines.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
h.	This is my favourite airline of all.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
i.	This airline will always reminds me of a particular phase of my life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
j.	This airline reminds me of things I've done or places I've been.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
k.	This airline reminds me of what I was like at a previous stage of my life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
l.	I have at least one fond memory that involves using this airline.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
m.	Using this airline somehow makes me feel at home.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
n.	This airline plays an important role in my life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
o.	Something would be missing from my life if this airline wasn't around any longer.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
p.	I feel that this airline and I were really meant for each other.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix 8b

		Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
q.	Every time I use this airline, I'm reminded of how much I like and need it.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
r.	I am addicted to this airline in some ways.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
s.	I would be very upset if couldn't use this airline when I wanted it.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
t.	There are times when I really long to use this airline again.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
u.	No other airline in the category can quite take the place of this airline.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
v.	I feel like something's missing when I haven't used the airline for a while.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
w.	I feel very loyal to this airline.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
x.	This airline can count on me to always be there.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
y.	I have made a pledge of sorts to stick with this airline.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
z.	I will stay with this airline through good times and bad.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
aa.	I have always been faithful to this airline in spirit.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
bb.	I am willing to make small sacrifices in order to keep using this airline.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
cc.	I have a lot of faith in my future with this airline.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
dd.	The airline says a lot about the kind of person I am or want to be.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
ee.	The airline reminds me of who I am.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
ff.	The airline's image and my self image are similar in a lot of ways.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
gg.	This airline and I have a lot in common.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
hh.	This airline helps me make a statement about what is important to me in life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
ii.	This airline is part of me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
jj.	I know a lot about this airline.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
kk.	I feel though I really understand this airline.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
ll.	I feel though I have known this airline forever.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
mm.	I know a lot about W/G as a company	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

About you

The folloW/G questions are very important to the success of this research. Please note that **no** individuals names or details will be passed on to W/G or any other company. The information **will not** be stored for alternative uses in the future.

Appendix 8b

13. Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements about your relationships with other people in general.

(Please circle one appropriate number per statement where one indicates you strongly disagree and seven that you strongly agree.)

		Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
a.	I find it relatively easy to get close to others	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
b.	I'm not very comfortable having to depend on other people	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
c.	I'm comfortable having others depend on me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
d.	I rarely worry about being abandoned by others	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
e.	I don't like people getting too close to me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
f.	I'm somewhat uncomfortable being close to others	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
g.	I find it difficult to trust others completely	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
h.	I'm nervous whenever anyone gets too close to me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
i.	Others want me to be more intimate than I feel comfortable being	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
j.	Others are as reluctant to get as close as I would like	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
k.	I often worry that my partner(s) don't really love me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
l.	I rarely worry about my partner(s) leaving me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
m.	I often want to merge completely with others, and this desire sometimes scares them away.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

14. As a customer, what is your attitude towards the strategies used by companies to build relationships with customers.

(Please circle one appropriate number per stated strategy where one indicates you strongly disapprove these strategies and seven that you strongly approve.)

		Strongly disapprove						Strongly approve
a.	Frequent flyer programme	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
b.	Company newsletters and updates	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
c.	Corporate magazines	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
d.	Customer care training for staff	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
e.	Open communication with customers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
f.	Database of customer details	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
g.	Service personalised for the customer	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
h.	Additional services for key customers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
i.	Mailings and promotions sent to customers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix 8b

		Strongly disapprove						Strongly approve
j.	Special events or occasions cards / gifts	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
k.	Partnerships with other companies to provide additional services to customers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Please could you complete the follow/G details about yourself.

15. Your gender

Male ☐ 1 Female ☐ 2

16. Your age group

Under 16	<input type="radio"/> 1	46 – 55	<input type="radio"/> 5
17 – 24	<input type="radio"/> 2	56 – 65	<input type="radio"/> 6
25 – 35	<input type="radio"/> 3	66 – 75	<input type="radio"/> 7
36 – 45	<input type="radio"/> 4	Over 76	<input type="radio"/> 8

17. Please state your nationality

18. Please state the average number of times you use a scheduled airline per year.

..... Times per year.

19. Your reason for flying

(Please tick one box for both part a and part b)

A	On this occasion		B	On most other occasions	
	Business	<input type="radio"/> 1		Business	<input type="radio"/> 1
	Leisure	<input type="radio"/> 2		Leisure	<input type="radio"/> 2
	Both	<input type="radio"/> 3		Both	<input type="radio"/> 3
	Other	<input type="radio"/> 4		Other	<input type="radio"/> 4

20. On this trip, which destinations did you go from and arrive at.

From-----to-----

Thank you very much for your time in completing this questionnaire.

All responses will be treated in the strictest confidence and will remain anonymous.

Please return the completed questionnaire in the reply paid envelope provided.

Appendix 9

Rationale for inclusion of each question in the quantitative survey.

<u>Question</u>	<u>Reason for inclusion</u>	<u>Hypothesis directly tested</u>
About you use of X – Introductory phase which can also be used for reliability checks		
1	Used to gather a history of the use of the brand. Can be used as reliability check for the stated relationship type as you would not expect someone saying they have a ‘fling’ relationship to have used the brand for 10 years.	
2	To ensure that the relationship is between the customer and the brand and so potential loyalty is stemming from the customer	
3	This is to again gather the scenario of brand portfolio’s	
4	This is to control for different levels of service used so that if differences are found in satisfaction levels or perceived quality then it is vital to check whether this is potentially attributable to the level of service rather than the relationships customers have with brands.	
About X		
5	To assess whether satisfaction and quality are correlated within this research as Berry and Parasuraman (1991) point out that satisfaction with services is based on service quality.	2, 3,5
6i	This question is to assess whether the customer recognises any relationship inducing approaches by the company.	4,5
6ii	To assess whether the respondent takes part in any scheme or has experienced any strategy to base any satisfaction or quality assessment.	4
7	Measure brand personality	3
Your relationship with X		
8	To measure satisfaction	2, 3, 5
9	To identify the relationship type as perceived by the respondent	1, 2,5
10	Assess whether a closeness gap exists as suggested by Barnes and to act as a reliability check for satisfaction.	
11	To assess whether the customer perceives their relationship to be with the brand or the staff	5
12	To measure brand relationship quality	1
About you		
13	To measure attachment style	2, 3, 4
14	To assess the customer opinion towards relationship strategies. This is to assess whether there is a correlation between satisfaction and the type of strategy used and the preference of attachment styles with alternative strategies.	4
15	Demographic details	
16	Demographic details	
17	To add a context to the customer usage of the service.	

Appendix 10a



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Kellie Vincent
Brand Management and Marketing Research

June 1999

Please spend a few minutes to help with our survey

I am carrying out research into the way customers view service brands for my PhD. studies. Professor Leslie de Chernatony who is a leading authority on branding, is supervising the research.

Brush/Comb kindly agreed to take part in the research as a case study. I would be very grateful if you would spend a few minutes to complete a questionnaire about Brush/Comb. This will only take a short time to complete.

All responses will be treated in the strictest confidence and will be anonymous. A return envelope has been provided which is pre-paid, so you do not need to put a stamp on it.

If you have any questions about the survey then please feel free to contact me at the Open University Business School on the number above.

The research depends on maximum responses and I look forward to your valuable opinions.

Kind regards,

Kellie Vincent BSc.(Hons) MSc.
PhD. Research Student
Brand Management and Marketing Research Unit

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